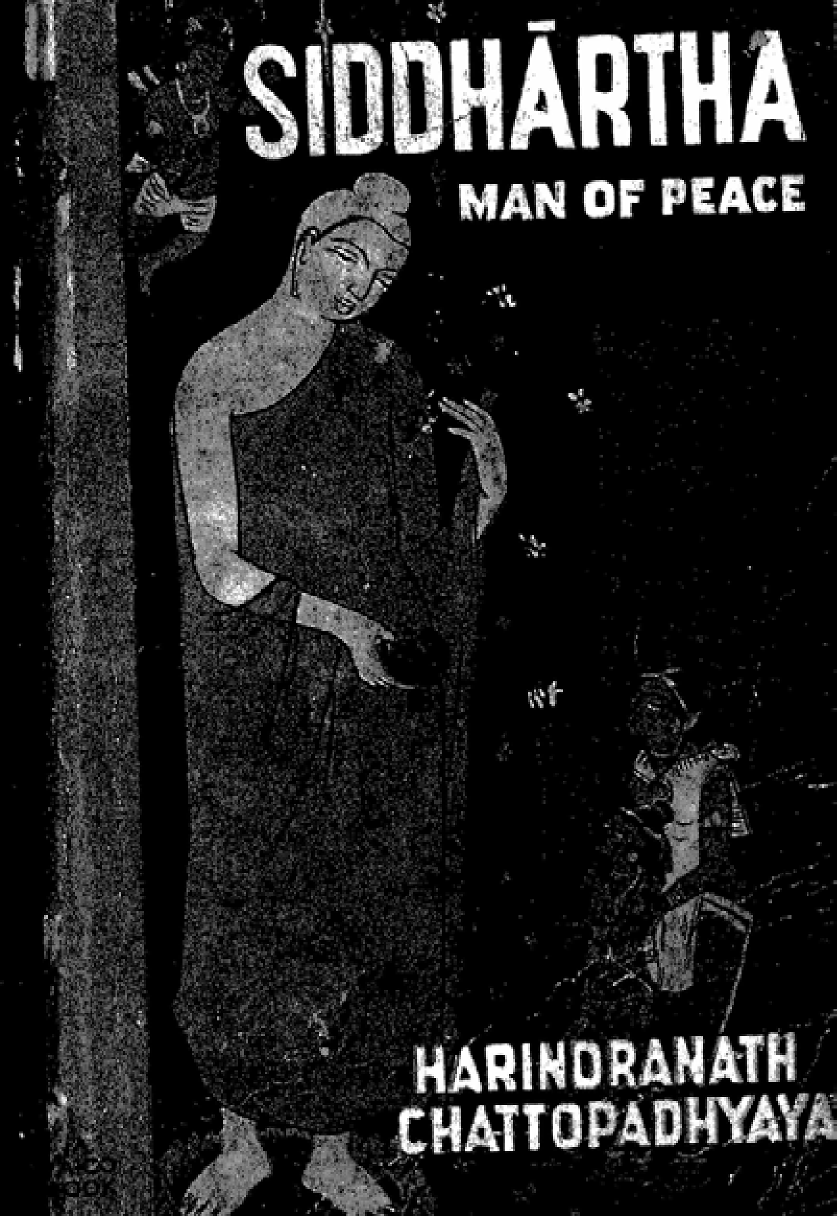

SIDDHĀRTHA
MAN OF PEACE
HARINDRANATH
CHATTOPADHYAYA

SIDDHARTHA

MAN OF PEACE

Ours is an age of universal conflict, frustration and unrest. Today, more than ever, when ghastly shadows of destruction are hovering over mankind, the revival of Buddha's message is needed to combat and eradicate these dark forces and to rekindle the light of compassion in human heart. Buddha's message is the message of Truth, of Peace and of Compassion. It has been one of the greatest moral forces in the history of man, a force that can free humanity from the fetters of self-imposed ignorance.

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SIDDHARTHA

MAN OF PEACE

(A DRAMA)

by

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

JAICO PUBLISHING HOUSE
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SIDDHARTHA—MAN OF PEACE

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★

JAICO PUBLISHING HOUSE

BOMBAY—CALCUTTA—NEW DELHI—MADRAS

Dedicated

to

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru

PROLOGUE

Before the drop curtain, a strip of front stage. On either side of it, steps lead down into the pit usually meant for the orchestra, but now converted to a shelter for people to hide in when the siren blows, since it is war-time.

From the centre of the proscenium arch is suspended a 16 mm. screen.

Before the drop curtoin, to the sound of the first announcing gong, a Palm-leaf screen—representing a Manuscript—is let down from the ceiling, to a pattern of soft-toned gongs in the background.

On the screen is inscribed in large bold letters :

SIDDHARTHA

MAN

OF

Here the screen is rolled up, while simultaneously Five Bhikkus enter, each with a banner bearing one letter to form the word

PEACE

They assemble in the centre of the stage. Suddenly there is a distant thud of bombs and with each

thud, one after another, the Bhikkus fall flat on their faces, while the bannered letters of the word Peace, too, fall along with them, cancelling itself.

BLACKOUT

Shriek of sirens ; confusion of excited voices. The front stage is lit up, revealing

PICTURE ONE

(Crowds running helter-skelter. Voices of men, women and children.)

VOICES

Rush down, rush down !
The siren, the siren ; it tears out our entrails.
Rush down, if you want to save your life.
Rush down with your baby, Neighbour.
To the shelter ! rush down ; to the shelter, if you want to see tomorrow !
Quick ! quick ! death waits for none !
But is life worth the saving ?
Ma, ma ! my doll !
Come along, you !
Good lord ! how the siren shrieks . . . like a devil!

(The crowds rush down into the pit from either side of the stage.)

BLACKOUT

(After a few seconds, the front strip of stage is lit up again revealing)

PICTURE TWO

(*On a rickety cot, a man coughing weakly, tries to sit up, while his wife supports him.*)

MAN
Everybody to the shelter . . . (*coughs*) everybody ! only I . . . only I can't move.

WOMAN
That is God's will . . .

MAN
God's will, indeed ! that men should flee like rats, die like flies . . . is *that* God's will ? Rot ! ! ! God's will, indeed ! I like that . . . I do ! It is man's brain, I say, that has made bombs and bomber planes (*coughs again*) God's will . . . indeed, indeed !

WOMAN
Pull yourself together. Be quiet, dear. If a bomb drops here you won't die alone. I am here——to share your death, even as I shared your life.

MAN
Everybody to the shelter. In the end, only the yawning grave shall be our shelter . . . and that end may be now . . . now.

BLACKOUT

Project on the 16 mm. screen library shots of actual warfare on various fronts, including
CUT SHOTS *of*
bombs dropping over towns and cities
bomber planes flying in patterns
rolling seas and battleships
ships torpedoed and sinking helplessly

COMMENTARY

War ! bloody war !
Human life bled and broken !
Mothers' wombs rendered a travesty !
Millions dying and dead
in Europe
in Russia
in China

(Thud of bombs ; booming of cannon ; trumpets loudly blown ; sirens still persisting above blended noises of groans and moans and parrot-like prayers offered up to some God somewhere in the hope that He might hear.)

CHORUS

Red-eyed war, vulture of hate, its giant pinions of steel unfurled
Roams over clouds and challenges heaven, vomiting gloom
Like sulphurous lava over this deeply beautiful world,
Vulture of lust, its ruthless claws keep clutching at life which groans for release,
Keen claws dipped in the blood of man, the blood of life and the blood of peace.
Cannon roar from shore to shore, bomb-bursts echo, machine-guns rattle,
Crass destruction of human life by cowards is christened sacred battle,
War's red lightning, war's dread thunder,
Green earth trembles. What does it matter
To the vulture of war that is out to plunder,

Is out to crack up the earth and shatter
The body of man in relentless slaughter ?
What does it matter
If seas foam blood instead of water
And the world like a floundering ship goes under ?

The dead who are more than the living deny even
elbow-room
To the new-born, time's interpreters of the funeral
pyre and the tomb,
The infant, unconceived as yet, refuses to enter
the womb,
Each day that dawns is dark as night since dawn
is afraid to bloom
While the diamond dome of all heaven grows dim
and the earth grows dumb with doom.

COMMENTARY (*above the sound*)

Today, when earth and sky are filled with gloom
And human life goes speeding to its doom,
When mercy and compassion are forgotten
And love deserts the heart, leaving it rotten,
When the whole world stands facing grim disaster,
Today, the world recalls the Golden Master,
The memory of Him who shall again
Establish beauty in a world of pain,
Whose message of compassion and of peace
Shall once again be heard and men shall find
release . . .

(*Back stage, the voices of Bhikkus chant together:*)

buddham sharanam gachchami
dhammam sharanam gachchami
sangam sharanam gachchami

PICTURE THREE

(The stage is now lit up revealing a European Traveller conversing with a Bhikku.)

TRAVELLER
Pray, what be the Master's name ?

BHIKKU
The Lord Gautam Buddha.

TRAVELLER
Did he found a religion ?

BHIKKU
No, our Lord did not set out to found a religion but to find for all humanity a way out of the shackles of human suffering, the cycle of birth, the shadow of death.

TRAVELLER
Pray, tell me more . . .

BHIKKU
He sought to free mankind from the torture of wrong desire, from the twisted cravings of unillumined flesh which lead it to annihilation. For this he left us his Eightfold Path.

TRAVELLER
I come from far away, brother ! I come to learn the message of the Great Master whose name rings throughout the world. The moon and the sun sound like gongs proclaiming his name, announcing his glory. I am eager, therefore, to learn from your lips the legend of the Lord who has shown the Path for men to follow, the Eightfold Path . . .

BHIKKU
Then, listen . . .

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

BHIKKU (*from back stage*)
About two thousand five hundred years ago, in the neighbourhood of Nepal, in Kapilavastu, reigned an illustrious King descended from the Sakyas, the strong race of warriors descended from the Sun and—the name of that King was

(*The curtain rises to the blare of dundubhis blown by a row of stalwart men arranged on a descending curve of platform on left of stage as viewed from audience.*)

ANNOUNCER
Maharaja Suddhodana !

(*The Court is soon packed with courtiers and officers, including the Minister, the Jester and the Court Poet.*)

VOICES

Salutation to our great King, our noble King !
The King of the line of Ikshvaku !
Proud and mighty descendant of the Sakya Clan,
Salutation ! salutation !
All hail to His Majesty !

(*Just as King Suddhodana takes his royal seat an excited Messenger enters.*)

MESSENGER
Glory be to the King Suddhodana !

JESTER
His face is as flushed as a shoeflower !

MESSENGER
Your Majesty, I bring tidings.

KING
What tidings do you bring and in such haste ?

MESSENGER
Tidings as bright as twenty rising suns !

JESTER
My Lord, he sounds as if he is out to steal the bread out of the mouth of our Court Poet !

KING
What tidings bright as twenty rising suns ?

MESSENGER
My Lord, the Queen !

KING
Yes, what about the Queen ?

MESSENGER
The Queen, my Lord, the Queen !

KING
Why, he seems moonstruck.

MINISTER
Speak out, speak out ! What tidings of the Queen ?

MESSENGER (*with a strange grin*)
The Queen Mayadevi is resting in an arbour of the Lumbini Gardens.

KING (*laughing*)
That's hardly tidings, she rests every day !

MESSENGER
Today she rests in quite a different way.

KING
I trust she is not indisposed, Messenger ?

MESSENGER
Never was she more well, my Lord !

MINISTER
I hope *you* are not indisposed, Messenger ?

KING (*laughs again*)
I dare be sworn this messenger is mad !

MINISTER
Indeed, my King ! the moon has played on him !

MESSENGER

Saner I have not been in all my life !
My King! if but your royal feet would tread
Towards the gardens and approach the arbour,
Your royal ears would listen to such music
As they have never ever heard before.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

(The cry of an infant and the whispering of young women, above the crooning of a lullaby.)

(From back stage)

Can you see how the cradle swings ?
Do you hear how the mother sings ?
Look, look ! antelopes gazing with large-eyed wonder at the newborn infant in the cradle ;
Monkeys sit circling round the cradle . . . look !
A female parrot is saying something to a male parrot,
Seated demurely on a branch ;
They are talking about the newcomer. . .
O what a shiver passes along the lotuses in yonder pool!
And how the peacock dances !
And the owls gaze right into the eyes of the babe
And the large-hooded serpent dances at the head of the cradle.

(The stage is now dimly lit up revealing the creepers and the flower bedecked Lumbini Gardens. The full moon is spreading its silvery rays on the stage from behind the trees. Mallika along with other companions of the Queen who have just returned from their wanderings across the gardens enter.)

MALLIKA
I'll go mad, if I don't contain myself now ! I'll go mad with joy, stark mad !

A COMPANION
O Mallika ! look at your hair, look at your hair !
It is like a torn cloud in a storm, flying here and there, here and there !

MALLIKA
O wonderful ! I don't know what to say.

ANOTHER
Mallika, what's happened on this Poornima day ?

MALLIKA
Most wonderful !

ANOTHER
What's wonderful ?

MALLIKA
What has happened is wonderful !

ANOTHER
But tell us, what has happened ?

MALLIKA
All that is wonderful in the world has happened !

ANOTHER
Have you discovered what you were out to discover.

ANOTHER
Tell us, do tell us . . . have you found a lover ?

MALLIKA
The world has found a lover. Look ! (*pointing offstage*)
Do you see ?

COMPANIONS
O Miracle !
What's that ?
The hood of a serpent
Become a large white flower !

MALLIKA
Queen Mayadevi has borne . . .

COMPANIONS
Boy or girl ?

MALLIKA
Neither. She has given birth to a god.

A COMPANION (*absent mindedly*)
This garden seems to wear a new feeling . . .
(*Stage is more lit up*)

MALLIKA
There's magic in the air . . .

(*Enters the Stage Asita Muni, a very old man with a flowing white beard ; he comes in chanting a prophecy.*)

ASITA MUNI
Lo ! he is born upon the earth
Who comes to put an end to birth,
Who, at the intake of each breath,
Has come to put an end to death.

SCENE THREE

(*The curtain goes down ; before it, in tremendous excitement, rush past.*)

A BLIND MAN
What's happened, what's happened, my God ! I was born blind, gravel-blind . . . all these years, all these years . . . and now, something has happened. I can see ! I can see ! O, how beautiful the world is !

A LAME MAN
I was lame all my life, all my life. God ! and what's happened now ? I can walk, I can walk ! (*breaks into a sob*)

A DEAF MAN (*shouting at the top of his voice*)
I was deaf ever since I was born. My God ! my God ! what's happened, what's happened on this full moon day. I can hear ! My God ! can you hear ?

A LEPER
I was a leper, a walking corpse. What has happened all of a sudden ? Am I really myself or somebody else ? (*strokes his arms and can hardly believe he is now a normal healthy human being*) The world will not shun me any more. O God , my God ! something has surely happened—somewhere. . . somewhere !

SCENE FOUR

(*The King's private chamber. The King, the Court Poet, the Court Jester and the Minister.*)

KING
O happy day, O happy happy day !
Such tidings have not been a lifetime long
As now just at the moment when I seemed
To walk into the shadow of old age,
The heart grown tired and nervous that our throne
After me would gape in gloom and sadness,
Without an heir to occupy that throne,
And lo ! today, O happy happy day !
I am the merriest man in all the world,
The proudest monarch and the proudest father.

(*Turning to the Poet*)

O Poet ! what a day has dawned for me . . .
This throne which has been waiting patiently,—

JESTER
Impatiently, my Lord, impatiently !

KING
Shall wait no more, now that our Prince is born.

MINISTER
And what a Prince ! like gold . . . that's what they are saying.

JESTER
My Lord, the Prince is like gold : we have heard it said several times, in waking and slumber, and times out of number ; but the Prince, they say, is like gold since those who say that, sure, are expecting to have a little gold put into their hands by way of remuneration . . . hi, hi, hi !

COURT POET
And now that he is born
Our noble King shall scorn
Old age which heralds winter cold and bare ;
So let it come tomorrow,
It shall not bring him sorrow
Now that the Queen has given him an heir.

JESTER
Everything in Nature longs for a little sun, a little air . . . hi, hi, hi !

(*The curtain comes down.*)

SCENE FIVE

(A group of Peasants before the curtain)

PEASANTS

Aho ! the soil seems to have been touched by a wand.

There's truth in what you say. All of a sudden our earth has yielded golden grain.

They are all saying that the Prince who has come into the world has the colour of gold.

One thing is certain though. The earth did not need much coaxing this time ; before we could toil and before we could till, she burst into grain as though she were ripe with motherhood, needing no nurse to attend on her.

Have you noticed how juicy each blade is this time ?

And what substance there is in each ear of corn ?

Well, it would seem that we were destined some day or the other to be freed from the yoke of overtoil . . .

O ho ho ! what a wise thing our brother has uttered. For sure we shall all be free, some time or other, from toil and over-toil ; since each one must lay down the sickle and the scythe and lie down in the very earth which bursts with grain.

And where you lie there will grow only thick thistle and wild weed.

Ha ha ha ha !

No, no ! I meant something different, I did, bless me ! we may yet have more leisure some day, some day . . .

And the land will be given to our brother here as a gift . . .

(Loud laughter all round)

Why do you laugh ? many a true word is spoken in jest.

Go'long ! you're just dreaming.

You never can tell ; dreams come true some day, you bet, somewhere.

(Enters an Announcer beating on his drum)

ANNOUNCER

Get out of the way, I say. I have an announcement to make.
Ye dwellers of the city ! listen !

(*A crowd gathers round him to listen*)

Today is one of the greatest days in the city ; not only in this city but in the kingdom ; not only in the kingdom but on the entire earth ; not only on the entire earth, but throughout the heavens ; a great great day, I say ! a great great day ! the greatest on any calendar in any age !

CROWDS

What's happened ?
Look at the fellow's eyes, how they bulge, like bursting sacks.
His face is turning red with excitement like the frill on the head of a cock announcing the dawn.
The Lord preserve his lungs ; they might burst, the way he is shouting.
That's nothing. Let them burst. He is paid for it.
He has never announced any news before in such terrible earnestness and at such a pitch ! Lord have mercy on his soul !
On his voice, you mean.

ANNOUNCER (*beating on his drum*)

Today, the palace which was dark, in spite of a thousand lamps and a hundred thousand torches, is lit at last ! the Queen Mayadevi has borne a Prince.

(*Excited cheers from all sides*)

A Prince is born ! a Prince is born ! heir to the royal throne.

(*Great rejoicing ; playing of nowbat heard coming from the nowbatkhana. A long line of lovely women singing and with kindled lamps passing by ; excited horsemen rushing along with the news of the day from one place to another. The street, represented by forestage, being decorated with festoons.*)

A MAHOUT (*enters and slaps a brother Mahout on the shoulder*)
Hey! what are you doing here ? get to work. The King is in haste to go to the Lumbini Gardens. Come along, come along. Let's go and start scrubbing and rubbing, rubbing and scrubbing the elephants and get them ready for the procession.

ANNOUNCER
A Prince is born ! a Prince is born.

(*Curtain*)

SCENE SIX

(*The curtain goes up on an ante-chamber in the palace ; a parrot in a cage ; women serving in the palace discuss the Prince.*)

WOMEN
They say he is like gold . . .
The King is handsome and the Queen is lovely. Why should the Prince not turn out to be what they say he has turned out to be ?
Arre ! what a difference it will now make to the palace.

A WOMAN (*to the parrot*)
What a difference it will make to our friend, the parrot, won't it now ?

THE PARROT (*shrieks*)
I am hungry ! I am hungry !

WOMAN
You fellow ! you are a parrot, after all. You only repeat what you hear ; you have learned that from the beggars in the kingdom.

THE PARROT
I am hungry ! I am hungry !

WOMAN
Our friend in the golden cage hardly knows that a King's parrot is far better fed than the children of the poor.

ANOTHER WOMAN (*looking out of the window*)
Come, come and see ! what a procession of chariots and elephants and palanquins ; they are going to meet the Queen and bring her back. What a p ocession of horses, neighing and foaming at the mouth, as they cover the road with their prancing. The roads are lined with huge crowds waiting to see the procession pass by ; they will wait all day, in the blazing sun, to see the procession return with the Queen and the Prince !

(*Sound of music in the distance.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*The curtain goes down and once again the forestage becomes the roadway. Crowds pass through, shouting and cheering. It is a day of festivity.*)

VOICES
The procession will soon return. Let us occupy points of vantage from where we can see best from.

GUARDS
Clear the roadway. Get out of the way. The royal procession is coming. Don't block the way.

(The Guards clear the roadway, the forestage, while the music grows louder and louder and the procession is approaching.)

(THE PROCESSION BEGINS: dundubhis, drums, conches, gongs, cymbals, dwarfs with chowries and peacock-fans larger than themselves; they are followed by all the animals described in the Jataka tales: owls, antelopes, serpents, parrots, peacocks, monkeys, white herons, squirrels, lizards, and many other creatures leading the rest of the procession; horses, elephants, chariots, palanquins. When the palanquin bearing Queen Mayadevi and the Prince passes by, the music grows heady and there is immense excitement.)

(The music dies down)

COMMENTARY *(on the mike)*

What an extraordinary procession ! the animals of the Jataka tales have all taken part in it. They bring to the surface the legendary aspect of the life of the Lord Buddha as well as the new consciousness which entered into Nature and the world at the instant of the Golden Birth. How inevitable and simple has been the share of these animals in the rejoicing and the celebration. Without

them the procession would have been wanting . . . for they are the dumb side of Nature which are part and parcel of the consciousness of the Lord Buddha, the Compassionate One.

SCENE EIGHT

(A group of women, gorgeously adorned, brings gifts for the Prince : unguents, perfumes, oils, saffron, sandalpaste, etc. Soft music plays throughout the scene.)

WOMEN
Here is sandal-paste for the little One.
And here are magic herbs for the golden One.
Here, sweet Prince, are strings of pearls for your little throat.

(Servants of the palace enter with large trayfuls of toys of all descriptions ; one by one, the citizens who have brought these gifts approach the Prince who is in the arms of th: Queen Mayadevi.)

CITIZENS
Here is a golden chariot drawn by dotted deer
And here are horses white as the moon on unruffled waters
And as red as sunrise on a hill
And as yellow as a sunflower
And here is a little elephant studded with the nine precious gems.
And here is an enamelled tortoise.
And here is a set of little musicians and dancers to fill the playroom of the little prince with pleasure and entertainment.

AN ELDERLY WOMAN

Bless you, Prince ! and may these toys engage your attention for hours and hours, and when you grow up into manhood, may their counterparts : huge elephants, swift horses, golden chariots, lovely dancers with perfumed breathing, great musicians with hearts full of colour and romance, fill your whole life with rich entertainment ; and may you love the earth with its rainbowed enchantments, and may you drink of the pleasures of love and of desire, and may your senses be lured away from sad thoughts by the tinkle of anklet-bells and the bright eyes of women . . . .

(*A Guard rushes in*)

GUARD (*announcing*)

The King with the sage Asita Muni !

(*The Women, the Servants and the Citizens retire leaving the Queen with Prince in arms alone.*)

MAYADEVI (*goes forward and places the Prince at the feet of the Sage*)

Bless him, O Sage !

ASITA MUNI (*bending down, picks up the Prince who is sucking his thumb*)

What are you doing, Queen Mayadevi ! this is no infant born of flesh. He is pure spirit. He is worthy of being placed on the head and not at the feet.

(*Asita Muni lifts up the child to the forehead and with closed eyes, addresses him*)

A thousand thousand salutations to you, O heaven-born!
Through centuries of penance have I won
A glimpse of you, O Embodiment of Illumination !

(*Then, placing the Child down, Asita Muni falls at his feet.*)

MAYADEVI (*not understanding*)
O divine Master ! what are you doing ?

ASITA MUNI
Trust me, O Queen ! this is no earthly Prince,
His kingdoms are not builded of the earth,
He is the ruler of the firmament,
The stars encrust his crown. Not over men
Shall he be lord, but over their sorrowful hearts
Which, ruling, he shall conquer, flooding them
With peace and high compassion. He has come
To shatter human bonds, to rid the world
Of mournful shadows. Human history
Shall yet record him
Lord of the world, lord of humanity.

KING
My brain is in a fog, my senses swim . . .
I cannot understand you, Master ! no,
I cannot understand you.

ASITA MUNI
You will, in time !
Eternity has blossomed to a flower
Which is your new-born, and the world shall smell
The fragrance of his being which shall flood
Each speck, each grain, whether of earth or heaven.
He is the Buddha, Golden Lord of peace,
Lord of Compassion . . . (*here he sheds tears*)

KING
Wherefore do you weep ?
You who have mastered wisdoms, you are weeping !

ASITA MUNI
I cannot help but weep when I consider
I shall not live to hear his golden message.

(*Asita Muni goes out quietly after handing the Prince over to the Queen Mayadevi. While going out he chants*)

Lo, he is born upon the earth
Who comes to put an end to birth,
Who, at the intake of each breath,
Has come to put an end to death.

KING
He seemed to speak in riddles.

QUEEN
His words were clear as daylight. I understood, I understood every word he spoke. O King ! my heart is breaking. It cannot bear the rapture. My blood swoons with excess of ecstasy. This Infant is eternal. Having borne him I must give up this frame which is mortal, this vessel of clay, this body which cannot survive the Great Birth. But O ! what a happy death ! (*she weeps*) Alas ! I shall not live to see him grow, to hear him speak....

(*Curtain*)

SCENE NINE

(The curtain goes up. On the forestage a scene of the Milking of Cows. The Milkmen and Prince Siddhartha's close Woman Attendant.)

1st MILKMAN
We hear the Prince is growing up like a god.

2nd MILKMAN
The gods never grow up. They remain the same age throughout the ages. (*laughter*)

WOMAN ATTENDANT
He is waxing like the moon. Already he glows like a moon.

1st MILKMAN
Fed on the milk of our cows, he is bound to grow round like a moon.

2nd MILKMAN
Or rounder than a moon, if that were at all possible.

WOMAN ATTENDANT
Joking apart, this cow of yours looks like Kamadhenu, the Cow of Boons! She yields and yields and never seems to stop yielding.

2nd MILKMAN
Why, so does our Minister. . . the way he seems to yield at every turn . . . (*laughter*)

WOMAN ATTENDANT
What a Prince we have now to attend on. He seems to be one who is born to yield as much peace and beauty as the world may be in need of.

(*Curtain*)

SCENE TEN

(The curtain goes up on the Private Chamber of the King and the new Queen)

KING
So, she has gone, leaving the Prince in your care. She had intuition. The ancients believed that when one discovered the secret of making gold, he died soon after. The Queen Mayadevi died, too, after performing a deed of alchemy.

QUEEN
And, while dying, how generously she handed over the Prince to my care, charging me to be his mother henceforth.

KING
She has become deathless through him. And since his birth, how everything grows riper in our kingdom and in our palace and—in ourselves ! grain and wheat, friendships of neighbouring States, and the Spirit within, grow riper, richer; and I now feel more and more drawn to a life of meditation.

QUEEN
That is why we have called him Siddhartha, the Ripe One. For he is the Ripe One through whom life which was once so raw becomes riper and riper.

KING
I know not what penance I had done in some past birth to have deserved in this the gift of a handsome Prince. O I am so unutterably happy ; so relieved that our throne shall not remain vacant after I am gone.

QUEEN
It is a poor throne you will be leaving, my Lord, for so rich an emperor . . .

KING
How ? how ?

QUEEN
Did not Asita Muni prophesy that he would rule over the hearts of men and not merely over men ?

KING
O yes, yes. . . he did, he did !

QUEEN
My King, he is not a human child.

KING
You are right. His body is softer than flowers. It almost looks like the Spirit itself grown visible.

QUEEN
Yet, he is also as strong and hard as diamond. Why should he not be ? He is the offspring of a great warrior-father.

K'NG
He will rule the kingdom with generosity, love, understanding and strength.

QUEEN
No, my Lord, he will not ever care to rule over an earthly kingdom.

KING
What do you mean ?

QUEEN
Already his eyes gaze into distance as though they were seeking something far beyond this old struggling world.

KING
You don't mean to suggest he will ever think of leaving this kingdom, this palace ?

QUEEN
How should I know, my Lord ?

KING
Retire awhile, Queen. Your words have set me thinking...

(*The Queen goes out*)

(*he claps*) Anybody there ?

(*A Servant enters*)

Bid my Minister come hither.

(*The Servant bows and goes out. Enter the Minister*)

MINISTER
Did your Majesty send for me ?

KING
I did.

(*Enter Jester*)

JESTER
You don't mind my presence, do you, my King ?
I am sure my absence must aggravate you greatly...

KING
Come, press my legs while I address our Minister.

JESTER
You call these legs, my Lord ?

KING
What are they, if not legs ?

JESTER
They are legacies, my Lord....hi hi hi !

KING
Stop your jesting awhile. Minister, I would have our royal Astrologer spend a little time with me...(*a pause*)... alone.

MINISTER
King, astrologers are mad men.

JESTER
And those who run after astrologers ?

MINISTER
Are kings !

(*The Minister goes out.*)

JESTER
If that be the case, then my mathematics says : kings are more mad than astrologers.

KING
Jester, make me laugh !

JESTER
O King, you make me laugh, you do ! the state you are in !

KING
Jester, do you think the sage Asita Muni suggested that our Prince would leave the kingdom and go into a forest ?

JESTER
Good Lord ! the Prince go to a forest ? have we all gone mad ? the Prince go to a forest and live on herbs and roots and grow a shaggy beard and look like a goat ? leave this palace and live under a banyan tree ? hi, hi, hi !

(*The Jester laughs most heartily*)

KING
What makes you laugh so heartily, Fool ?

JESTER
To see what a fool a King like you can be ! what a puppet in the hands of others ! yet, after all, according to my mathematics, Kings are puppets, what do you say ?

KING
Asita Muni was a seer...

JESTER
Indeed, indeed he was—a seer who saw not beyond his nose, God knows ! O (*with a waive of the hand*) forget his prophecy, Sire ! Nobody on earth can tell the future, for the simple reason that there is no such thing in reality ; all is myth created by the mind which can scarcely live without creating one sort of myth or another. It is all a question of chance. Your Prince, who is now growing into superb boyhood, is both hale and hearty. He is going to grow up into a well-fed fellow, and going to beat the pot-bellied priests hollow, as far as the body is concerned ; he will never be an ascetic, lean and gaunt

and underfed. Well, here comes our royal Astrologer....hi hi hi ! what an ostentatious fellow ! embodiment of brag and boastfulness !

ASTROLOGER
My Sire has bade me come into his presence ?

KING
I am troubled at heart, Astrologer !

ASTROLOGER
Troubled at heart ?

JESTER
Unlike an astrologer who is constantly troubled at the stomach.

ASTROLOGER
Pooh, to be troubled is unkingly.

JESTER
The fool doesn't know that the head that wears a crown has a face that wears a frown and a heart that tumbles down and a mind that wanders here and there, here and there (*he breaks into a humming and begins to dance.*)

ASTROLOGER (*angrily*)
Like you who are a clown. King ! I suppose that unnecessary specimen of humanity called a Court Jester, that survival of history, might leave the royal apartment while I spend a little uninterrupted leisure in the royal presence of my King.

JESTER
Unnecessary survival of history...you ! (*snaps his fingers at him and goes out in a huff*)

KING (*indulgently*)
O he is a simple fellow, means nothing, though he seems to say a lot.

ASTROLOGER (*casting his dice and doing strange calculations*)
Fear not, Sire ! we astrologers know more than your sages and seers. Remember, the stars are our neighbours and we know them and their habits by habit. We can make them do what we want. I shall cast a horoscope of our Prince and woe betide the planet that dares suggest that the Prince shall ever meet with any gloom or sorrow.

KING
Will he ever leave the kingdom and become an ascetic and wander in a forest ?

ASTROLOGER
Woe betide the planet that dares to suggest that he wil' ever become an ascetic, thus overthrowing the long tradi tion of the Great Line of Warriors from which he is descended.

KING (*relieved*)
O Astrologer !

ASTROLOGER
Woe betide astrology and astrologers and woe betide the heavens which dare disprove us ! Besides, King, we have incantations which can change the course of wayward stars, can change them and give them a new direction ; and, besides, too, King, we astrologers of your Court are not traitors, to eat your salt and forget that we are eating it ; and forgetting it, commit unhappy cal-

culations. We never forget that you pay us handsomely.

(The Jester peeps through the curtain)

JESTER
Yes, yes, paid handsomely and overgrown into bloated pots which your bellies resemble. O what hollow fellows you are, 'pon my word ! you beat the priests almost, in circumference, I mean.

(Indicating the line round the waist.)

KING
Jester, you are incorrigible !

JESTER'
My Lord, you mean, I am encourageable !

ASTROLOGER
It seems to me that that fellow you encourage, my King, is not so much a jester as a jest !

(Curtain)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

(Before the drop curtain a group of men with sacks on their backs pass through while others discuss ; two or three of these men put the sacks down awhile and join in the discussion.)

Wealth is a wonderful thing for those who share it.
But an ugly thing for those who have to bear it

Day in, day out, in heavily bulging sacks
Ours are the backs of asses, not human backs.

(*Forced laughter*)

(*One fellow, wiping the sweat off his brow, speaks up for loyalty to the King.*)

But all the same, we should be loyal, loyal to him who needs us,
We must serve him with utmost loyalty, since he clothes and feeds us.

(*A disgruntled fellow*)

But, tell me, should we be loyal to a king who bleeds us ?
It is quite a problem to decide as to who feeds whom !
We don't know why we sweat, but we know that we have to sweat.
But how is it, brother, that some sweat and some don't ?
O you forget
That is called *karma*... in some past birth we sow the seeds
Of unfortunate actions, of evil deeds
And in this we must reap the fruits of those deeds and actions...
He believes in the old saying : as you sow so shall you reap.

Well, well, well, to tell you the blunt truth, I don't understand philosophy.

It is not philosophy but the blunt truth. It is common sense.

Don't blame him...he hasn't any.

Arre ! but the thought of the birth of a Prince ! O it makes the burden lighter.
Our brother almost takes away my breath !

How does a prince's birth save a poor man's death ?

Joking apart, since his birth the King seems to feel a disgust for wealth and all that sort of thing. He is nowadays always found praying to his household gods ; hardly ever donning his regal robes ; indulging only in simple food, as we do...

We don't indulge in simple food, we eat simple food because we cannot get anything better. Yes, you are right, the King *indulges* in simple food. The King is allowed to indulge in anything he likes !

But why should he not eat simple food, I ask ? he must be pretty fed up with complex meals of which he has had a surfeit. Besides, he is getting old ; his bones are decaying and so are his teeth. A man after forty should not eat too much ; in fact, he ought to be satisfied with only one wholesome meal a day and no more. Any way, it is high time the King gave up a life of luxury and pleasure. Besides, too, there is the Prince now for whom he should begin to make way.

The Lord have mercy ! what wealth has been pouring in since the birth of the Prince who seems to have been born under the luckiest and the most generous of stars.

I wonder and I wonder whether that star will be good enough to change ours to some extent, at least.

SCENE TWO

(The curtain rises revealing the King looking out of the window while his Messengers breathlessly rush in with news. It is obvious that the King is most dejected and looks on at the passing procession of gifts below.)

MESSENGERS
My Lord ! to celebrate the birth of the Prince your Majesty's neighbouring territories have sent all those gifts which you see passing before you like a procession resembling a many-coloured rainbow...

A hundred oxen, my Lord ! dappled like an autumn sky with clouds of copper.

Two hundred elephants from the king's western neighbour : once a bitter foe, now a real friend.

Yes, your Majesty ! two hundred elephants from the Himalayan peaks.

(*Enter Jester*)

(The Jester stands quietly by the King without a single word.)

Huge and dark elephants, like clouds fresh-drawn from horizons struck with lightning.

KING (*to himself*)
Huge and dark, huge and dark...yet, not huger and darker than the thought which treads the heart-ways, night and day, night and day.

JESTER
What thought, my Lord ?

KING
Messengers, leave us awhile...(*the Messengers exit*)

KING
You know it already.

JESTER
Yes, my Lord, I think I know; at least, I know I think and, therefore, I know I know...It is the constant dread your Majesty feels with regard to our Prince; the dread that he might some day leave the palace and disappear into the jungle. O Sire! it is a most unfounded and unkingly dread. Our Prince has royal blood in his veins ; and that blood will not allow him to seek the company of wild beasts unless it be with an excuse to aim at them and shoot them through the heart. Surely, you do not mean to tell me, Sire, that the royal descendant of the line of the Ikshvakus and Lord of Kapilavastu has brought forth something which is non-human ? (*tickles his foot to make him laugh*) hi hi hi ! Look, look out of the window and just see what's happening ! I can hardly believe my eyes...

COMMENTARY (*on the mike*)

What horses !
Red-brown as hills bathed in sunlight
Golden as sunsets
Eyes burning like jewels
What horses, O what horses !
How they trot! how they neigh !

(*Enters a little fellow, Channa, who leads a young colt into the chamber.*)

JESTER
Look at this little creature with a little creature. My Lord, he is twelve years old Channa, son of your charioteer ; and destined I believe to be the charioteer of your son !

KING
Why, he has a light in his eyes which do not seem of the stables !

JESTER
Yes, Sire, this little fellow does have a light in his eyes; he was born in a stable, so it may be said to be a light that is stable, hi hi hi !

CHANNA
Sire, I beg leave to say that this colt was born almost at the same time as our Prince was born. It is, I think, specially born for the Prince ; and when I grow up, I beg leave from now to state that I hope you will decide what I have already decided...which is, myself to become the Prince's charioteer. My name is Channa, and the name of this colt is Kanthak. Both these names were chosen by my father.

KING (*stroking the colt*)
Beautiful baby-horse, isn't it ?

JESTER
Might be a baby-mare, for aught you know, your Majesty.

KING
A baby-horse or a baby-mare ! what difference does it make, in the end ?

JESTER
O, in this kingdom, at least, it makes a world of difference ; since this kingdom is so so absurdly full of strong sex-distinction and idiotic sex-complex that it would certainly make a difference. In any case, Sire, a mare would make a great difference to a horse !

KING
Well, I think a horse is a noble animal...

JESTER
It certainly is a far more handsome animal than most men, my Lord! you being one of the rare exceptions....

KING
O Jester! there is no limit to your insolence.

JESTER
I am glad you did not call it sedition, Sire ! In this kingdom when one speaks the truth it is usually called sedition. I agree with you, finally, that a horse is a noble animal ; but then, so is a mare ; so are most mares with one exception...

KING
What exception ?

JESTER
A night-mare, your Majesty ! hi hi hi !

(The Jester goes out quite amused with himself. The King is still seated by the window. While going out he takes Channa away, leading the colt.)

(Enters the Prince with a white Toy Horse in his arms ; first Nurse leads him into the chamber

and spreads out a number of toys on the dais. From the opposite direction, through an inner door enters the Queen who quietly stands beside the King while they watch the Prince together, lost in admiration. First Nurse and the Prince settle down to play.)

KING
Perhaps, he is a one-day guest in our home.

QUEEN
Perhaps, he is an eternal guest in the whole wide world.

(Here a screen is drawn across the King and the Queen leaving the stage-space only for the Prince and the Nurse and other characters who come in.)

SECOND NURSE (*coming in with a silver vessel of milk*)
Here's milk for the princeling . . . Lovely milk !

(Third Nurse enters with her child in her arms.)

THIRD NURSE (*pointing towards Siddhartha*)
There, you see ! he is the Prince, your master. When you grow up . . .

(Siddhartha looks towards him and smiles and continues to play absent-mindedly.)

When you grow up, you will be one of his loyal and obedient servants, you understand ?

(She tries to make him bend before the Prince.)

SIDDHARTHA
Come and play with me.

THIRD NURSE
Prince, he is only a servant and you are a Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
We are both of us little boys. Come, let's play together.

SECOND NURSE
No, Prince, you must not play with a servant boy. You have your position to keep.

SIDDHARTHA
Position ? what's that ? (*laughs*) funny word . . . I don't understand it.

FIRST NURSE
You will when you grow up . . .

THE NURSE'S CHILD
I want that horse, Ma !

SIDDHARTHA
Which horse ? the black horse ? the white horse ? the red horse ?

THE NURSE'S CHILD
That one, there.

NURSES
No, you must not ask . . . Bad boy !
How dare you . . . be quiet.

SIDDHARTHA
He wants the red horse. Here, take it.

FIRST NURSE
No, no . . . he shan't have it.

SECOND NURSE
You must not spoil the boy, Prince. He will sit on your head, next.

THIRD NURSE
No, Prince ! you must not get him into bad habits.

SIDDHARTHA
You want me to get into the bad habit of not giving away my things ?

THIRD NURSE
But, Prince, it is your toy . . .

SIDDHARTHA
That is why I am giving it away. Here, it is now his toy and nobody must take it away from him. (*He gives the Child the red toy-horse*). And along with the horse, here's a chariot, as well. What would the horse do if it had no chariot to draw?

THIRD NURSE
See what a sweet Prince we have ? you are very naughty ; you must never ask for toys again. I'll never bring you here if you do.

(*She is about to leave the chamber along with the Child when Deva Dutta enters, a bad-tempered cousin of the Prince Siddhartha.*)

DEVA DUTTA
Stop, you thief ! running away with toys from the palace.

NURSE
Master Deva Dutta ! it is an insult to the Prince to call a loyal servant of his a thief . . .

DEVA DUTTA (*struggles with the Child*)
Give back the toys. (*The Child bursts into sobs*)

NURSE (*rescuing them*)
They belong to my child ; they are gifts from your cousin, Siddhartha.

DEVA DUTTA
A servant boy, that's what he is . . . a low-down servant boy . . .

SIDDHARTHA (*approaching*)
What's that you are saying ?

DEVA DUTTA
How dare you give your toys to a dirty low-born servant boy. ?

SIDDHARTHA
This little boy is my friend.

NURSE
He is my child and I am his mother. I love him as much as your mother loves you.

DEVA DUTTA (*defiantly*)
My mother doesn't love me . . . and I don't care. Siddhartha, did you say that this brat was your friend? Have you gone crazy ? You who are born so high naming such a low-born creature your friend ?

SIDDHARTHA
Highborn, low-born ! You say funny things. All I know is that we are both little boys and, therefore, equal·

Go, Nurse, and let the child be happy with the toys. I will give him more when he wants . . .

(*They go out*)

DEVA DUTTA
Everybody laughs at you. Everybody laughs at you because you are so funny. Everybody says you are not like us. You don't look like a *kshatriya*, a warrior, and certainly you don't behave like one.

SIDDHARTHA
How does a warrior behave ?

DEVA DUTTA
He must be a brave fighter; go to a jungle and kill every animal he meets.

SIDDHARTHA (*suddenly growing deeply quiet*)
Kill ? what's that ?

DEVA DUTTA
Yes, shoot an arrow at a bird or a deer, and there ! it bleeds. O blood is red, red . . . and what a nice colour red is ! isn't it ?

SIDDHARTHA
Kill ! why, what a mean thing you are saying, cousin Deva Dutta ! does a warrior kill innocent animals ?

DEVA DUTTA (*boastfully*)
I can kill a big elephant.

(*Siddhartha closes his eyes and seems to be lost in deep thought.*)

(*Deva Dutta continuing*) When I grow big I'll break the head of an elephant, a real elephant, and everybody will know how strong I am ; everybody will call me a real *kshatriya ;* everybody will say : why, how different he is from his cousin Siddhartha who is a coward ! What are you but a coward, the way you keep closing your eyes while I talk of killing an elephant. You are afraid ! Siddhartha ! open your eyes ; don't be nervous. See, look !

(*Seizing the toy-elephant*) I'll break a real elephant's head like this.

(*So saying, he smashes the head of the toy-elephant and feels quite proud of himself*)

SIDDHARTHA (*slowly opening his eyes.*)
What have you done, Deva Dutta ? What did this poor elephant do to you ?

DEVA DUTTA
Poor elephant ! O ho ho ! Guruji ! you coward ! I smashed your elephant's head only to show you how I shall smash real elephant heads when I grow up, that's all. You are not a warrior. A warrior never closes his eyes in fear; he is always ready to wound, to hurt, to kill, to make things bleed . . .

SIDDHARTHA
O, I see. That's what you call a warrior, do you?

SCENE THREE

(*The curtain goes down and before it we see Channa leads Kanthak by a tether, and talks to it.*)

CHANNA
And now, you must behave nicely, you simply must, since I am taking you to Prince Siddhartha. You and he were born at the same moment ; only, he was born in a Garden while you were born in a stable.

(*The horse neighs*)

Something tells me the Prince is going to like you, and something tells me that you are also going to like the Prince. But (*sadly*) I hope the Prince is going to like me also.

(*Prince Siddhartha comes from the other side*)

SIDDHARTHA
O what a fine creature ! white, pure white ! I like you, little horse and I like you, too, Channa ! Will you be my friend ?

CHANNA
I shall always be proud to be your servant, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
I want you to be my friend.

CHANNA
I thank you, Sir !

SIDDHARTHA
Don't call me sir. Call me Siddhartha.

CHANNA
I dare not, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
What is this creature's name ?

CHANNA
Kanthak.

SIDDHARTHA
And yours ?

CHANNA
Channa.

SIDDHARTHA
And mine is Siddhartha. Call me Siddhartha. Kanthak, Channa and Siddhartha are three good friends, aren't we now ?

(*Embraces Kanthak*)

O Channa ! if only Kanthak had wings !

CHANNA
Prince, you never know. He may yet run swifter than a bird !

(*Curtain*)

SCENE FOUR

(*The curtain goes up on a chamber in the palace. The parrot is inside a cage hung by a golden chain. The Queen is alone in the chamber.*)

PARROT
I am hungry. I am hungry ! I am hungry !

QUEEN (*calling out to a Maid*)
Champa ! Champa !

VOICE (*from within*)
Queen Mother, I am coming.

QUEEN (*to herself*)
This parrot seems to have forgotten every other sentence of late but that dreadful sentence.

PARROT
I am hungry ! I am hungry !

(*Enter Champa, the Maid*)

QUEEN
Why has the parrot been shouting "I am hungry, I am hungry" ? have you fed it ?

CHAMPA
Yes, indeed, your Majesty, he has been, well !—more than well-fed, I should say. He has been literally overfed, especially since the birth of the Prince. He eats capsicum as red as his own beak and capsicum as green as his own plumes and still his shout continues to be sharp and pungent as a capsicum !

QUEEN
He seems to have become restless of late.

CHAMPA
Yes, your Majesty ! he used to be quieter before ; but, somehow, he seems to be restless now : always trying to peck at the bars of the cage to wear them out ; it would almost seem that he wanted to escape.

QUEEN
Escape ? (*Siddhartha enters quietly and goes towards the cage*) .

PARROT
I am hungry ! I am hungry !

SIDDHARTHA (*tenderly to the parrot*)
Hungry ? Sweet bird ! I have heard you say that ever since I can remember. Are you always hungry ? aren't you fed properly ?

(*An Old Servant Maid is passing through*)

Do you hear ? I want to know whether this bird has been fed ?

OLD SERVANT MAID (*crochety*)
Fed ? Why, Sir, it has been more than fed ; it seems to be always hungry and we are tired. We are fed up feeding it !

(*The Servant Maid goes out.*)

SIDDHARTHA (*to Champa*)
That poor old woman is tired. She is tired, perhaps, with overwork. I don't blame her. Champa, has this little friend of mine been fed ?

CHAMPA
Indeed, Master, what the old woman told you was right ; this parrot is never satisfied. It always cries out : I am hungry, I am hungry !

SIDDHARTHA
Then he is hungry for something more than mere food. Mother ! (*to the Queen*) this bird here is hungry for the spaces, I understand him so well ! He is hungry for wide blue spaces—(*to the Parrot*) am I right, sweet bird ?

(*From below, a clear Voice rings out addressing the Prince*)

VOICE
Are you there, Prince ? Aho-ho-ho !

SIDDHARTHA (*going to the window*)
That is my friend Channa's voice, for sure. How it rings. Aho-ho-ho! it, too, seems to hunger for wide blue spaces.
I am coming, Channa! coming! Kanthak, Channa and Siddhartha are friends now; they will always be friends and hunger together for wide blue spaces . . .

(*He goes out*)

QUEEN
Already he seems to prove the old Sage Asita Muni's prophecy!

SCENE FIVE

(*The curtain goes down and before it, lit up by a spot of light, Siddhartha and his Guru are seen conversing.*)

SIDDHARTHA
I salute you, O Master who have taught me the science of weapons, the art of archery. You have taught me to aim at a lemon dangling by a fine thread and knock it off the thread; further, you have taught me to split the fine thread itself with the point of my arrow; through your great guidance and grace, I have become what the world might even call a master-archer.

GURU
Yes, indeed, my Son! you have acquired mighty proficiency in the intricate science of weapons and the difficult art of archery.

SIDDHARTHA
Guruji! you have, indeed, taught me the art of slaying

man should he become an enemy, but alas ! you have not yet taught me that art which can slay the enemy of man himself.

GURU
What is that art, my Son ?

SIDDHARTHA
The art of slaying the worst enemy of man . . .

GURU
The name of that enemy ?

SIDDHARTHA
Wrong desire.

GURU
O that is not what youth should worry about ! Desire is not wrong.

SIDDHARTHA
Wrong desire is not right !

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

(Then, after a while, in the darkness there are shouts of :)

Open the gates ! open the gates ! I am Deva Dutta.

(When the stage is lit up we find at either corner of it a Sentry Box with a Sentry in it almost falling off his seat while snoring heavily.)

VOICE (*from outside*)
Open the gates, I say, or I'll open them presently myself, and then your heads, you insolent nincompoops guarding the gates ! You do not know what strength there is in me and in my elephant, Kalagiri, Black Mountain, who can clear any obstacle which dares to come between me and my purpose. Open the gates, you asses of the kingdom !

VOICES OF MAHOUTS (*offstage*)
Aho—Sentries! open the gates, the cousin of the Prince wishes to enter the royal grounds. You know us. I am the Mahout, Bahu.

ANOTHER VOICE
And I am the Mahout Kajal. Open the gates.

(*There is profuse knocking and banging outside.*)

FIRST SENTRY (*yawning, half sleepily*)
Sounds as if a storm is raging outside our city gates.

SECOND SENTRY
Who's there ? Give the word.

VOICE OF DEVA DUTTA (*offstage*)
The word be hanged and with it may you be hanged, whoever you may be. Open the gates. I am the lord Deva Dutta.

FIRST SENTRY (*with a wink*) To SECOND SENTRY
Why, that's the rake and villain, Deva Dutta.

SECOND SENTRY
Give the word, I say ! MUDRA !

MAHOUT'S VOICE (*offstage*)
ANANGA !

FIRST SENTRY
Well, that's Bahu who knows all about the word.

MAHOUT'S VOICE TO DEVA DUTTA (*offstage*)
Get off the elephant, Sire. The gates are being opened. I have passed on the word.

SENTRIES
Pass, for all is well

(*Enters Deva Dutta*)

DEVA DUTTA
All is well ? I doubt it. All is not well, certainly not with you or you.

SENTRIES (*bowing to Deva Dutta*)
Welcome, young Master

DEVA DUTTA
You bend your heads beautifully. You seem to have had quite enough of rehearsals and you are ready to bend your heads on the block, which I shall make you do, you sleepy disobedient idiots who neglect your duty. You just wait. You just wait.

(*He goes out*)

FIRST SENTRY
How stupid Nature can be. Now, who on earth can believe that Deva Dutta is the cousin of the Prince Siddhartha ?

SECOND SENTRY
His eyes are always red like the fire of an oven.

FIRST SENTRY
What else can they be ? Nights of liquor and days of vagabondage, knocking about from gamblers' dens to brothels !

SECOND SENTRY
That Ambapali girl, notorious courtezan, has caught him in her noose and makes him pay through the nose for his pleasure !

FIRST SENTRY
How different are the eyes of the Prince Siddhartha ! cool and kind and soft and compassionate.

SECOND SENTRY
If these eyes be not the eyes of a blind man I might say that the eyes of the Prince are the eyes of a god. Siddhartha is not a human something ; he is just not something what you may call human—you understand ? He is a god, a god !

FIRST SENTRY
Or let me put it in a slightly different way. Perhaps, so far the world has only had sub-humans and Prince Siddhartha is the first Man that has come into existence.

(*They laugh, and light their leaf-pipes*)

BLACKOUT

SCENE SEVEN

(*The curtain rises on another chamber of the royal palace. The King Suddhodana is seated in grave mood ; beside him stand his Minister, Court Poet and Court Jester.*)

(*Enter Deva Dutta*)

DEVA DUTTA
My King has bade me come into his presence ?

KING
Long life be yours. I called you, Deva Dutta !
I wish to know if you have met the Prince,
And if so, I should like to know from you
How he behaves and what he talks with you,
And what you think of him.

DEVA DUTTA
I know not why
But I am sad. I know not what to say,
Or, if I do, I know not how to say it.

KING
Speak.

DEVA DUTTA
My Lord, the Prince is more than strange,
He seems not one of us. Siddhartha's eyes
Are always drunk with thought and far away
As though they saw us and yet saw us not,
As though they sought horizons far beyond
The earth's domain. Sire, he sits alone,
All day he sits alone and dreams and dreams,
So like a statue made of stubborn stone,
Channa, his only friend,—a charioteer
His only friend, as though the kingdom lacked
In high-born friendships made of high-born men.
However, Sire, to cut the story short:
He sits, the very image of a god,
Which to a clan of warriors like our own
Proves veritable insult. We are men,
We live, we love, we dream of wars, we build

Ambitious fortunes, not waste our lives away
In false ascetic dreaming.

KING
What are you saying ?
I shall not have Siddhartha turn a sage,
I will not have him turn into a god,
Not for the prophecy of any sage !
I'll make him burn with colour and with fire,
Afford him sights to make him ache with passions,
I'll make him leave the heavens and walk on earth,
I'll see to it he grows into a man,
I'll see to that...Believe me, I shall see
That no ascetic blots our Sakya clan.

COURT POET
The little god of Love hath subtle ways,
He aims the surer when his bow delays
To speed the dart, and what a terrible dart
The dart of love is when it wounds the heart !

DEVA DUTTA
Well done, well done ! Sir ! you sing like a prophet.

MINISTER
But he is a prophet, being a poet.

COURT POET
Though made of flowers Love's dart is stronger than
Envenomed darts man uses against man.

MINISTER
Well said, well said !

COURT POET

Sire, it were easier, be it understood,
To wrench the jewel from a serpent's hood
Than pluck a human heart once it is caught
In Beauty's tangled nets with cunning wrought.

KING

O Poet of my Court ! you do uplift
My heart from gloom. Here is my royal gift.

(The Minister takes one of the bags of gold from a tray and hands it over to the Poet.)

And now let me quote the words of our own Court Poet :

A bag of gold ? But it is quite absurd
In weight before a poet's precious word.

(The Court cheers while the bag is handed over to the poet.)

COURT POET *(bows and continues)*

Nay, do not grieve, my Lord ! to tell you truth
Siddhartha is young ; his body burns with youth,
Springtime is on him now ; his flesh is kissed
By growing passion ; he can not resist
That passion long. It is a passing whim,
A phase, a mood. There's nothing wrong with him.

(Loud cheering in the Court)

KING

I think I understand.

COURT POET

Our Prince is only
A little melancholy. He is lonely
And now needs special company.

MINISTER
It is our duty
To see to it...

COURT POET
He weds a woman's beauty !

(*Cheering again*)

KING
That's just what's needed...

MINISTER
We've already made
Large preparations.

COURT POET
It must not be delayed,
It shall not be delayed.

MINISTER
Next full moon day
There'll be a feast.

COURT POET
From near and far away
Thousands of highborn ladies will assemble
With beauty that shall make his young heart tremble.

JESTER
And if the Prince should fall in love with the whole lot of them, he would have a harem which would be no harm !

KING
Stop it. You talk and talk and talk, in season and out

of season. I assure you you will be born a parrot in your next birth.

JESTER
Not only in season and out of season, but in reason and out of reason, you mean, Sire ! However, that's that.

MINISTER
We shall request the Prince to give away gifts and should he choose to choose any one among them for his bride, he may do so at the feast.

JESTER
Marriage is a funny thing, 'pon my word. It is like arithmetic, you see ? One and one make two, yes—but it is not like arithmetic, neither ! For, after the one and one make two, the two become one—hi hi hi ! and one and one make three and four and, sometimes, a whole dozen ! That's called a family. Hi hi hi !

KING
O Jester ! you are a jackass !

JESTER
The jackass will never forgive you for the insult, my King !

SCENE EIGHT

(The curtain goes down and before the curtain Elephant Keepers, MAHOUTS, discuss.)

MAHOUTS
We must get the royal elephants brushed up and ready. Brush up the royal elephants, scrub the chains

Until no trace of dust or rust remains.
Brother ! go on ! be wise ! brush up your brains
They need a brushing up...
Why all this chatter ?
Enquire first if he has got grey matter !

(Laughter all round)

Joking apart, the elephant of the King is getting somewhat lazy. Or, perhaps, it is going in for contemplation, like the King himself, losing, as he is, all interest in possessions and processions and all that.

I say, it is wonderful, I tell you ! They say, that a small ant, when it enters the ear of an elephant, can, with a sting, kill the elephant.

Very much like what a small whisper can do, and does do, when it enters the ear of a big person. A whisper with a sting in it can kill that person.

Deva Dutta, that detestable cousin of that most adorable Prince Siddhartha, is that sort...a stinging ant, enough, though, to poison and slay with a sting a big elephant of personality...

Aho-ho-ho ! let's get ready...

(Curtain)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

(A white projection screen covers the space of the stage. From behind, a shadow-picture of crowds lining up the roadway, chariots rushing along against a background of structures which give us a distant

glimpse of the City of Kapilavastu. The entire scene is to be accompanied by blended sound and noise on the mike: of men and women, cheering, rattling of wheels, cracking of whips, galloping and neighing of horses etc. The entire sound-pattern to suggest great excitement.)

(On the 16 mm. screen, suspended from the centre of the proscentum arch-frame, are projected movie shots of chariots driven by joy-drunk charioteers and bearing beautiful ladies; this is blended with the shadow-picture and the mike sound-patterns interwoven with voices, while an Announcer announces with great gusto to the throbbing of his drum, and at the top of his voice:)

ANNOUNCER

Hundreds of ladies, one more beautiful than the other, have been anxiously awaiting the dawning of this wonderful day of destiny: the feast at the palace of the King Suddhodana at which the Prince Siddhartha, it is rumoured, will choose his bride. The hearts of these ladies have been counting the moments with their beats; and now, to the beating of my drum which increases the beating of those hearts, I have the proud privilege of announcing

The rushing of chariots towards the palace
The ladies in them talking to each other
And they have only one theme, one only theme.

WOMEN'S VOICES ON THE MIKE

They say the Prince Siddhartha is more than just wonderful.

He must be, since he is descended from the Sun! The race of the Sun is famous for its handsome men.

They say his face is round like a moon.
They say his face is a mirror which reflects all the greatness of the world, the magnificence of creation, combined splendour of stars.

ANNOUNCER
And here comes the beautiful daughter of Dandapani. Her name is Yashodara. She is lost in deep thought; she does not discuss the Prince with anybody. All that one finds in her face, just now, is a burning anxiety to reach the palace in time. Her charioteer is doing his best to make speed speedier. Let us hear her and her charioteer :

(*Voices on the mike*)

YASHODARA
Charioteer ! faster !!! faster, pray...the day wears on...

CHARIOTEER
Come on, come ! speed up, you horse ! I can run swifter on my two legs than you on your four ! speed up ! don't you know our lady Yashodara must reach the palace in time ? (*clacks his tongue*) Now, be a horse—don't be an ass !

YASHODARA
Why, even a snail crawls faster !

CHARIOTEER
Lady, as a matter of fact, it isn't the fault of the horse, believe me. The fact is that Time is running fast, so fast that our chariot seems to be moving slow, very slow. And that is what I call the logic of time in terms of man !

By man, of course, I also mean woman, since, as the saying goes, man embraces woman. (*laughs*)

YASHODARA
This is hardly time for jesting. . .(*then suddenly, she screams*) O—what on earth has happened ? (*sudden neigh of horse*)

(*On the screen we see a wheel come off and roll on from one end to another of the stage.*)

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

(*The stage is lit up to reveal Yashodara and her Charioteer with the wheel that has come off. . .*)

YASHODARA
O what an evil day ! Whose face did I see first thing this morning ?

CHARIOTEER
As far as I can remember, it was mine, Lady ! But let me tell you, nothing serious has happened, really. . .

YASHODARA
The wheel of my chariot alone has come off, while the wheels of other chariots have gone on and on with the speed of lightning. Alas ! ill-fated that I am !

CHARIOTEER (*mending the wheel*)
Lady, I pray you, be not perturbed. Let not one ruffle be seated on your brow, since, within a few moments, you will be seated in your chariot again. I'll set the wheel right before you can count ten ; and I assure you, you will reach in a most auspicious moment. We cha-

rioteers have a way of saying things which come true ; we have a saying among us that when a wheel comes off a wedding comes off—and that is pure logic, Lady, the logic of wheels in terms of ladies.

YASHODARA
You and your logic ! I do not think it is kind to jest at this moment...

CHARIOTEER
I was never more in earnest, Lady, than at this moment. (*looking across stage*) There's another chariot coming this way. O ! that is the Prince Siddhartha's notorious cousin, Deva Dutta.

(*Offstage Deva Dutta's voice : Stop, Charioteer. There's a beautiful woman in trouble. Let's go towards her, leaving our chariot behind.*)

YASHODARA
Deva Dutta. The city calls him a cancer.

(*Enter Deva Dutta with his Charioteer*)

DEVA DUTTA
Is it some sort of accident, I wonder.

DEVA DUTTA'S CHARIOTEER
It is going to lead to an incident, as far as I can make out. (*to Yashodara's Charioteer*) Why, what's happened, Charioteer ?

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
Nothing serious. A circle has come off a straight line, and that is pure logic, the logic of wheels in terms of speed.

DEVA DUTTA'S CHARIOTEER
He means to say, Sir, that the wheel has come off its axle. We charioteers have our own way of saying things.

DEVA DUTTA
Lady, pardon me, but your charioteer seems to be very witty.

YASHODARA
I wish he were less witty in a moment like this.

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
Sir, I just told the Lady not to bother. I also told her: when a wheel comes off a wedding comes off. That's what we charioteers say...(*turning round to the other Charioteer*) now, don't we, Brother ?

(*Deva Dutta laughs his sides out*)

DEVA DUTTA
Upon my life, I must say you charioteers are damned clever.

YASHODARA
We are delaying, Charioteer. We shall be late.

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
Better late than never, Lady, that's the old, old maxim.

DEVA DUTTA'S CHARIOTEER
Better never than late, that's a new, new proverb !

(*An outburst of laughter on the part of the charioteers in which Deva Dutta joins, while Yashodara stands helpless and anxious and full of irritability.*)

DEVA DUTTA
I did not know, my dear Charioteer, that you were so witty !

DEVA DUTTA'S CHARIOTEER
Why, Sir ! even our horses are witty.

DEVA DUTTA
Lady, I take it you were on your way to the Feast of Bride-Choosing at the palace of the king Suddhodana ?

YASHODARA
Yes.

DEVA DUTTA
But why need you go all that long way ?

YASHODARA
At least to catch a glimpse of the Prince Siddhartha.

DEVA DUTTA
Is it not enough you have seen my face ? They say that I am far more attractive than the Prince around whom they have, in any case, woven a myth. And when I say that I am more attractive, I am merely putting it with some amount of humility.

YASHODARA
Humility does not seem to be your strength.

DEVA DUTTA.
Nor can you say it is my weakness.

YASHODARA
You certainly don't seem to be unaccustomed to over-boldness ?

DEVA DUTTA
I am sorry, Lady, but may I have the audacity and the honour to offer you a lift in my chariot ? It is waiting outside. I am going the way you are wanting to go.

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
I am sorry, Sir, you stand little or no chance of being chosen as the bride of the Prince. (*Laughter*)

DEVA DUTTA
Come, now, come, Lady ! let me be your charioteer. I shall drive the chariot, and my chariot will feel honoured to bear on its wheels such a beautiful lady as you ! You will sit like a Princess while....

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
Like a Princess. What do you mean ? She is a Princess.

YASHODARA
You are the Prince Siddhartha's cousin, I take it ?

DEVA DUTTA
Not quite. The Prince Siddhartha is a cousin of mine.

YASHODARA
O, well then, I am sorry for the Prince.

DEVA DUTTA
Sorry ? So am I. He is a weakling, a coward.

YASHODARA
You have no manners.

DEVA DUTTA (*trying to be funny*)
Manners ? manners ? why, of course, man errs. To err is human, to forgive is divine. I am the man who errs, you are the one who forgive and are, therefore, divine.

YASHODARA
Will you please leave this spot immediately ?

DEVA DUTTA
Unfortunately this happens to be a public road and it belongs to anybody who may want to use it.

YASHODARA
But not to misuse it. I wish to remind you that the road may be public, but I am not. . . .so, there !

(*Deva Dutta is obviously angry*)

YASHODARA'S CHARIOTEER
The wheel's all right now, Lady. (*to the other Charioteer*) I say, your master's tongue runs fast, but now, I assure you, our horse will run faster !

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

(*We resume the shadow-screen picture and among other shadows we notice the Charioteer fixing on the wheel to the chariot ; then it begins to move with Yashodara stepping into it*)

(*The stage is lit up revealing Deva Dutta and his Charioteer in conversation.*)

DEVA DUTTA
She was as lovely as water in the dawn, but sharp as the lightning of a monsoon-burst !

CHARIOTEER
She is the daughter of Dandapani of the Sakya Clan : Yashodara.

CHARIOTEER
Yashodara ! Was that Yashodara ? Well, well, well, she is a cousin of mine. That explains it.

CHARIOTEER
Explains what, Sir ?

DEVA DUTTA
Your dull-wittedness. I meant, Stupid, that her being my cousin explains the beauty she bears. Yet, what after all is relationship ? A figment, a mere superstition. It can be changed as easily as a garment.

CHARIOTEER
I beg to suggest, Sir, and I hope to be excused if I sound insolent, I beg to suggest that your tongue is clever but not wise.

DEVA DUTTA
Better than its being wise and not clever, as they seem to think Siddhartha's tongue is. Personally, I prefer being clever to being wise. Wisdom, again, is a superstition. Come, come. The feast will be a real feast now that Yashodara will glow like a ripe moon over the horizon of heads of women less beautiful than she, yet beautiful withal. Let us overtake them...

CHARIOTEER
Sir, sometimes, when a man tries to overtake another man, it happens that some other man has to undertake him !

(*Inordinate laughter*)

DEVA DUTTA
Don't you bother. I am destined to live longer than the Prince and our chariot will certainly reach the palace, in any case.

CHARIOTEER
But, Sir, the feast is only for ladies. You may not be allowed to enter the palace. And even should you be, you would look like a fish out of water there.

DEVA DUTTA
Among ladies, you mean ? You don't know me, then !

CHARIOTEER
Sorry, Sir, I forgot for a while how at home you were in the company of the fair sex.

DEVA DUTTA
The unfair sex, you mean.

CHARIOTEER
Prince Siddhartha, they say, doesn't even so much as look at women.

DEVA DUTTA (*scornfully*)
Nothing strange. He is not a man.

CHARIOTEER
You are right, Master. Everybody says that he is not a man.

DEVA DUTTA (*pleased beyond measure*)
Is that so ? Well, what do they say ?

CHARIOTEER
That he is not a man, but a god !

BLACKOUT

(*The rumble of wheels and the cracking of whips and the jumble of voices continue and slowly fade out.*)

SCENE FOUR

(*The curtain goes up on a vast hall in the palace. Ladies seated in tiaras. At one corner of the hall a group of men including Deva Dutta who seems to eye the beautiful ladies greedily. At vantage point the Prince Siddhartha is seated giving away gifts to the ladies who approach his royal seat with great tremour and excitement. One after another they receive gifts and go back to their places.*)

(*The Minister and the Court Poet are seated close to the Prince. While the gifts are being given an Announcer announces the gift.*)

ANNOUNCER
The Prince now presents a jewelled fan. And now, an enamelled casket. And now, a nine-gemmed mirror... the last gift. (*there is a furore since Yashodara enters flushed and excited*)

ANNOUNCER (*continues*) Over a hundred gifts have already been given away, and here comes the daughter of the Sakya Clan.

DEVA DUTTA
But alas ! too late ! (*a tittering among the ladies who are happy about it.*)

ANNOUNCER
Better late than never !

ONE WOMAN (*mockingly*)
She has come very early to the feast, hasn't she ?

ANOTHER
Hasn't she ? (*titter*)

ANOTHER
She imagined the prince would await her arrival before starting the distribution of gifts ! How stupid !

ANOTHER
The Prince, in any case, has mentally chosen me. I could half see it in his eyes.

ANOTHER
O ! I don't know ! He looked at me as if he were sure that his stars tallied with mine.

(*Whispering and tittering continue*)

YASHODARA (*rushing up to the Prince*)
O Prince, Prince ! it wasn't my fault that I was late. The wheel of my chariot came off.

SIDDHARTHA (*gazes into her eyes for a long while.*)
Calm yourself. It is all right. Alas ! I seem to have given away all the gifts...already.

YASHODARA
Nothing left for me ? (*the group of women titter and laugh*)

ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER
Tears won't make pearls.

ANOTHER
She is trying the old technique of a woman : to win over with tears.

SIDDHARTHA
Why do you weep ? You should be happy.

YASHODARA
Happy ? alas ! Sire, you want me to be happy at my misfortune ?

SIDDHARTHA
I want you to be happy at your good fortune.

YASHODARA
Is it good fortune to arrive after all the gifts have been given away ?

SIDDHARTHA
Here is a special gift for you, straight from the heart, and not from the listed gifts for the feast.

(*Unfastening a pearl-necklace from his own neck he gently fastens it round Yashodara's; there is a bustle in the hall. The crowds are left wondering as to what has really happened. The women are obviously wild and hot with anger and envy.*)

DEVA DUTTA (*biting his lip*)
Siddhartha is mad if he thinks he is going to win Yashodara for his bride. I'll show him. I'll show him. Cheat, coward, weakling !

ONE WOMAN
What ? what has happened ? But she came last.

ANOTHER
And we have become least.

ANOTHER (*contemptuously*)
Pooh, pearl-chain ! pearls are most unlucky. Good ! let her suffer. Who wants to suffer in the shadow of a strange, half-sleepy, half-crazy Prince like him ?

YASHODARA (*who has been lying almost prostrate with ecstasy at the Prince's feet*)
Prince, I have nothing to offer in exchange.

COURT POET (*to Minister*)
Did you mark his words ? straight from the heart, he said...the Prince said. So, he has chosen her, it would seem beyond a doubt....

MINISTER (*in a whisper to Siddhartha*)
Have you chosen her, Prince ?

SIDDHARTHA (*calmly*)
I have chosen her.

VOICES
Who is she ? We want to know who she is. Tell us, who she is. We ask, who is she ?

MINISTER (*to Yashodara*)
May we know your name, please ?

YASHODARA
Yashodara.

MINISTER
Yashodara !

VOICES (*expressing different views*)
Yashodara ! The famous Yashodara who is hardly seen by any one ! We have been hearing of her. She is as rare as a festive moon. She hardly comes out of her mansion. She is a Princess herself. Yashodara. No wonder. Pooh ! she is not half so beautiful as rumour used to make out. Distance lends a lot of enchantment to people and things.

MINISTER
Announcer ! announce. The lady Yashodara has been chosen by the Prince Siddhartha.

ANNOUNCER
The lady Yashodara has been chosen by the Prince Siddhartha.

(A sudden blaring of dundubhis, loud acclamation both inside the hall as well as offstage. Slowly the women get up and leave their seats, obviously dejected. The crowds disperse. Only Deva Dutta is left behind. He comes forward after Siddhartha leaves. When the hall is absolutely empty, Deva Dutta occupies the centre of the stage and boastfully speaks.)

DEVA DUTTA
I'll show him yet ! If I am a *kshatriya*, a warrior, I'll show him yet. He will walk over my corpse before he wins Yashodara for his wife. But the chances are that I shall walk over his corpse and make Yashodara my bride.

(Before the curtain the Announcer passes by announcing to the beat of his drum.)

ANNOUNCER
The Prince Siddhartha has chosen Yashodara, the beautiful daughter of Dandapani of the Sakya Clan. Marriage celebrations will soon be announced and all the subjects of the kingdom shall be fed and gifts distributed by the Prince.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

(The curtain rises on a room in Dandapani's House. Dandapani is seated amidst friends, mostly old men who are his great admirers.)

DANDAPANI
That is called fortune : the Prince, to have rejected a hundred lovely ladies who gathered at the feast, and to have chosen my daughter, Yashodara, even in spite of her having reached when the feast was almost about to end.

AN OLD MAN
And yet, fools don't believe in planets and horoscopes !

(Enter an Elderly Man)

ELDERLY MAN
Sir, the cousin of Prince Siddhartha, Deva Dutta by name, desires audience with my master, Dandapani.

DANDAPANI
Give him warm welcome. (*the Elderly Man goes out*)

(*Turning to his friends*)
Deva Dutta ! why ! he is related to us. This is the first time he calls on me ; come to offer congratulations, I suppose.
(*Enter Deva Dutta*)

DEVA DUTTA
Allow me to bow humbly before a great warrior.

DANDAPANI
What, may I ask, brings you to our humble abode, Deva Dutta ?

DEVA DUTTA
It is sometimes refreshing to pay one's respects to an authentic warrior such as you are, Sire !

DANDAPANI
It is most refreshing to hear such high compliment from one so young as you to one so old as I. Tell me, is there aught else in your mind which has brought you here ? You—you come to congratulate me ?

DEVA DUTTA
Yes, indeed ! I think it is the greatest news of the century that your fair daughter, the daughter of a celebrated *kshatriya*, a mighty warrior like you, has been chosen by the Prince Siddhartha.

DANDAPANI
The Prince Siddhartha, too, is a *kshatriya*.

DEVA DUTTA
O yes. Indeed—I was forgetting. He is a *kshatriya*—by birth, if that is what you mean, and yet, (*shrugging his shoulders*) well,—the less said about it and him—the better. However, my congratulations !

DANDAPANI
Half-hearted congratulations, I notice. I don't get you.

DEVA DUTTA
Nor would the Prince get Yashodara if only you knew what a coward he was !

MEN
What does he say ?
Coward ?
Prince Siddhartha, a coward ?. Incredible.
And yet, who knows ? He may be right, for aught we know.
He ought to know his cousin better.

DANDAPANI
Coward? Strange !

DEVA DUTTA
He is nervous of the arrow; trembles to hold a sword; can't stand the smell of blood; turns his face away from the hunt and spends hours and hours with closed eyes, as though he were blind...which I think he is. I may be wrong—but I suppose it has been our custom to see to it that our women are married to warriors and not to cowards. Is that not so, Sire ?

(*Dandapani and his Friends nod their heads in assent*) Warriors who do not wince at wounds. But, (*toning down*) it is crass impudence for *me* to tell *you* what you know so well already.

AN OLD MAN
I think he speaks wisely.

ANOTHER
Old in experience though young to look at.

ANOTHER
Old wisdom on young shoulders. Very very sensible, what he says.

DEVA DUTTA
I crave your pardon, Sire, if I have offended you....

DANDAPANI
Offended ? why....

AN OLD MAN
On the other hand, you have only put our friend on his guard. And that is service rendered by a young warrior to an old warrior.

DEVA DUTTA
Big words don't suit a small mouth like mine, Sire.

DANDAPANI
While I agree with you, Deva Dutta ! I still must confess to being in a quandary. It is too late now to retract. The day of the betrothal is almost about to be settled and now to go back would seem—well, to say the least, an act of cowardice, a thing most hateful to our clan.

A MAN
He is quite right. It is a problem.

ANOTHER
A problem which seems impossible of solution.

DANDAPANI
I cannot, in any case, go against the decision of King Suddhodana.

DEVA DUTTA
You will not need to go against the royal decision if only you will consent to abide by my plan.

DANDAPANI
You have a plan ? Let us hear.

DEVA DUTTA
Tell the king that Yashodara will be glad, and you might add, proud to accept the hand of the Prince if, before the world, he prove worthy of her hand ; for which purpose, tell him, a tournament should be arranged for young warriors. And so, a tournament will be arranged and we shall all of us join in the contest and he who wins the tournament shall win her.

AN ELDERLY MAN
Brilliant plan. Why, he does have old wisdom on young shoulders.

AN OLD MAN
I told you he had. I am acquainted with human nature.

ANOTHER
The idea itself is worth ten thousand *suvarnas.*

DEVA DUTTA
It would not seem out of place, would it, this very small request? It suits as a prelude to the matching of Beauty with Strength.

DANDAPANI
The King could have no objection whatsoever to such an idea. It would be entirely according to old custom.

MEN
Indeed, you are right.
It is justifiable.
It should be done. You cannot take anything for granted; especially, the mettle of a warrior.
It is according to old custom.

SCENE SIX

(*As the curtain comes down, Deva Dutta steps in front of it and soliloquizes.*)

DEVA DUTTA
A Prince's heart may be broken with impunity, but never, never an old custom! (*He goes out. In front of the curtain appear Cotton Ginners, including one Fat Woman; they set their ginning instruments before them and while ginning break into sing song to the rhythmic throb of the ginning instruments.*)

FAT WOMAN
Make a large, cosy, rosy, luscious, precious, delicious, alluring, enduring, attractive and active comfortable bed for the bride and the bridegroom.

GINNER (*laughs*)
Large and warm

ANOTHER
Cosy and rosy

ANOTHER
Alluring, enduring, attractive and active....

ANOTHER
Well, she, in any case, does not answer to any of these qualities.

GINNER
Comfortable bed...O yes, that's what she could be! (*laughter all round*)

(*Enter Announcer*)

ANNOUNCER
This is to announce that a tournament is being arranged for young warriors according to old custom. The marriage celebrations of the Prince Siddhartha and Yashodara, the beautiful daughter of Dandapani, the Warrior, have been postponed by a fortnight.

(*Beats on the drum and goes out*)

GINNERS (*to one another*)
I fear we have started to make the marriage bed too early.
Does it mean that he who wins at the tournament wins the lady Yashodara?
There is some snag in this postponement.
The Prince Siddhartha still stands a chance of losing her.
Rubbish. You will see. He will win. His calmness

is his strength. Other young warriors brag a great deal. Pride goes before a fall. Boast cooks its own liver.

SCENE SEVEN

(The curtain rises on a Tavern; kegs, old furniture, old armoury on the wall, oven on which legs of mutton are being roasted, etc. A non-descript group of men. Some are already drunk and tipsy. One Man is so drunk that he is dead asleep and snoring.)

A TIPSY FELLOW
Look at our brother....

ANOTHER
Not just look at him. Hear him. The way he snores! Enough to drive out a whole host of enemies if they dare attack the kingdom of our generous king!

TAVERN KEEPER
If ever you think that it is time to finish thinking
The only way I suggest is by heavy drinking.

(Pointing to the dead drunken fellow whom he is trying to lug into a corner, dragging him by his leg.)

A TIPSY FELLOW
Great is the joy of liquor, there's no joy greater.

ANOTHER
It is only when I drink and get drunk I believe in some sort of Creator!

ANOTHER
A drink-house, believe me, is the only sensible institution. Do you agree?

ANOTHER
Indeed, I do. The head is revolved here
And many a knotty problem seems to be solved here,
And——a drink-house is really a House of Revolution!
(*pointing to his head*)

VOICES (*in excitement*)
Here comes our favourite friend and preceptor: Deva Dutta.
Long live Deva Dutta. He is the best thing God created.
Fool, God doesn't exist. Only the devil does. He is powerful. And to be created by such a One means to be a powerful creature.
Long live Deva Dutta. What a handsome man. Young? Why, he is the meaning of youth if anything at all is anywhere and at any time. Day by day he grows handsomer and handsomer. Look at his upper lip-streak of moustache! Looks as if he might be an important actor in some Touring Theatrical Company.

(*Enter Deva Dutta*)

DEVA DUTTA
To everybody, my salutations!

ONE FELLOW
Welcome, Deva Dutta, Cousin of the Prince Siddhartha.

ANOTHER
Welcome O Warrior! Cousin of a Coward! (*laughter all round. The entire Tavern is now very merry and hilarious.*)

DEVA DUTTA
In honour of my seventeenth birthday which happens to be marked by this day, I stand all of you present here drinks, drinks, drinks....

ONE FELLOW
Sorry those who are not present have missed the chance.

DEVA DUTTA
Tavern Keeper ! Master of Liquor Kegs ! let the bowl go round.

VOICES (*in great excitement*)
Bless you, bless you. What a generous soul !
Like a cloud which scatters showers of silver.
And on all alike, without any distinction or preference.

(*The Tavern Servants take the drinks round*)

A TIPSY FELLOW (*between hiccoughs*)
This is to the health of our young warrior, member of the royal line, Siddhartha's cousin, so unlike Siddharhta... to his health !

ANOTHER
Drink to another's health and ruin your own...(*laughter*)

TAVERN KEEPER
Drink makes a fool a wise man and a wise man a fool.

DEVA DUTTA
Well, what are you betting on today ?

A VOICE
On tomorrow's tournament.

(*Ambapali enters unnoticed and stands in the background.*)

A TIPSY FELLOW
I lay a wager that our Deva Dutta will win it and with it the hand of the beautiful Yashodara.

A VOICE
O hush. Here she comes, half angel, half-lioness.

ANOTHER
She is like a net out to catch us fish.
A pot of honey she is ; we are the flies gathered to settle round her.
She is a serpent and we are the frogs.

(*He imitates the croaking of a frog*)

ALL TOGETHER
Ambapali ! the only Ambapali in the world !

AMBAPALI (*coming forward sits on a high seat and then, stretching forth her right foot, addresses Deva Dutta*)
Come, kiss it, Deva Dutta.

DEVA DUTTA (*hungrily clutching her foot and kissing it*)
O what an exquisite foot ! Like a lotus.

A TIPSY FELLOW
Not when it kicks.

DEVA DUTTA
We were just talking about you.

AMBAPALI
About me ? Is that so ? I heard another name mentioned here. And who, may I ask, is this Yashodara ?

A CLEVER FELLOW
It is the name our friend Deva Dutta has given to his new garden.

AMBAPALI
A new garden ? planted overnight, I suppose ?

TAVERN KEEPER
Bought at a big price about a week ago.

AMBAPALI
It is a miracle that he still had something left over after squandering whatever wealth he had. Well, well, your brotherhood seems very very merry this morning.

ONE FELLOW
Because we have been talking of you, only of you this whole morning through.

AMBAPALI
You should be taxed each time you take my name or even so much as breathe it.

DEVA DUTTA
O precious Courtezan ! well said. In fact, men should offer your feet *suvarnas* each time they even so much as catch a glimpse of you ; another lot of *suvarnas* each time they hear you speak ; and yet another lot of *suvarnas* when they smell the maddening fragrance of your hair ! (*comes close to her to sniff, but he is repulsed politely*)

A TIPSY FELLOW
Princess of our Tavern ! tomorrow there is to be a tournament.

AMBAPALI
A tournament ?

ONE FELLOW
Yes, a tournament. Deva Dutta will be one of the competitors.

AMBAPALI
Competitors ? For what ? For whom ? Not for me, surely ?

TAVERN KEEPER
O no, no. . .it is only to prove to the world, once and for all, what a real warrior he is.

AMBAPALI (*mockingly*)
O Warrior ! wonderful Warrior ! who loves to kiss my foot !

A VOICE
If only to prove there is one Deva Dutta in the world, he will compete in the tournament tomorrow.

TAVERN KEEPER
Only one Deva Dutta who is head over heels in love with the only—the one and only—Ambapali !

VOICES (*cheering lustily*)
Long live Ambapali ! Long live Ambapali !

AMBAPALI
What a curse you have pronounced. You should not have shouted "Long live Ambapali". It makes no sensee. You should instead have shouted "May Ambapali have youth forever ! May her hair always be black !"

A TIPSY FELLOW
Never say die ! But use dye all the same when the hair grows white, and it always looks black. Why bother?

ANOTHER
Joking apart, let me tell you, I have heard a strange thing. I have heard that even the King and the Queen of this kingdom, parents of the Prince Siddhartha, have actually begun to dye their hair.

VOICE
Dye their hair ! Have you heard fiction more fictitious than that?

DEVA DUTTA
It is a fact that fact is stranger than fiction. I have seen them do it. It is to protect the eyes of the Prince from sights of old age and decay. That's what we are told. O ho ho !

(*Loud laughter on all sides*)

They want the Prince to be surrounded with beauty that never fades and youth that never alters and, hence, falsehood of deepest dye ! The King has given strict orders that nobody who is old and decrepit, and no one who is dead, in the bargain, should be allowed to appear before our Prince, the warrior—O ho ho! (*The whole tavern splits with laughter*)

ONE FELLOW
The coward ! For what else is a man who cannot face the facts of life and death ?

ANOTHER
Death is the only fact of life.

AMBAPALI
Wait, wait (*she holds her sides which are splitting with laughter*). O, O—I choke. Never heard of such a ridiculous proposition in all my life. So, help me, God of the starry heavens ! grant me beauty that never passes; blackness of tresses which never turns white; eternal power to make men reel and rave before my feet scented with musk and painted with henna; grant me the moment when I shall be able to cure the cowardly Prince of jangled nerves and nature which is one long nightmare !

ALL TOGETHER
May your prayers be answered !

DEVA DUTTA
They shall be answered. They must be answered. I'll see that they are answered. Or else, I'll smash the heads of the gods, I will...

AMBAPALI
What lunatics you men are ! What dogs you become once you begin to dog a woman like me. And how proud, in the bargain, you seem of your doghood. (*laughter all round*)

DEVA DUTTA
Even abuses from your lips seem to drop like honey from a hive of bees. You are not a woman, O Angel ! You are an angel, O Woman !

AMBAPALI (*once again stretching her foot*)
Come, kiss my foot again. Do you like my feet?

DEVA DUTTA (*hungrily clasping it*)
Like your feet ? What a question ! (*kisses the foot*) That's the only answer !

AMBAPALI
Do you see? The strong hero of tomorrow's tournament! How he obeys me, like a weakling without a will of his own. See?

A VOICE
It is so silly to be so silly about such a silly thing as a mere—woman!

ANOTHER
Yes, Brother! It is easy to say that. But once the net is spread and the fish is caught, it can't get out. Well, that is life.

AMBAPALI
That is death!

BLACKOUT

SCENE EIGHT

(In the darkness the audience listens in to a commentary on the tournament in progress. Immense buzz of crowds and outbursts of cheering off and on.)

VOICES
Look, look! look at that wonderful hero, Siddhartha, on whom the women of Kapilavastu have gone daft! See how his hands tremble!

You are right, Deva Dutta. His hands are trembling like branches caught in a blast. Do you see how his lips twitch?

Like a squirrel's, thirty twitches to a second!
He can't cancel the impression I have already made on the populace, can he?

Not at all, Deva Dutta. Your horsemanship, your archery, your breaking of the metal hoop, your sword-feats...

Well, sometimes a black sheep is born among the white. A coward is sometimes born in a home of warriors. A Siddhartha is sometimes born as a cousin of Deva Dutta!

(*Suddenly, there is a mighty cheering from the crowds. There is hardly any doubt left that Siddhartha has made a tremendous mark at the tournament.*)

CHEERING CROWDS
Siddhartha is the hero of the day!
Siddhartha, the great Prince, is the hero of the tournament! He has scored more points than all the other young warriors who imagined they were superior to him in prowess! Long live Siddhartha!

WOMEN'S VOICES
O! Yashodara will now be his bride.
Siddhartha, the Prince, has won the tournament, and now Yashodara will win the Prince Siddhartha.

(*An immense confusion of voices, excited beyond measure ; blowing of conches and of dundubhis. Shouts of "Siddhartha has won. Siddhartha is the winner of the tournament. Siddhartha! Siddhartha!*)

(*The stage is lit up revealing*)

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta, remember ! A warrior is not one who just wields the sword or speeds a dart or rides proudly on a prancer performing breath-taking feats of strength :

not merely do these make a warrior. No, no! Deva Dutta! he is not a warrior who intrigues against others ; he is not a warrior whose blood craves for the blood of others. The true warrior can and does perform great feats when the time comes, but he hides his powers under a constant and simple humility. He does not boast of them before men. He does not brook bravado in his behaviour or attitude. Boast and brag are the sure signs of cowardice, not of heroism as you seem to think. The true warrior is tender and compassionate ; he is brimful of love and understanding : true marks of heroism. Therefore, understand, Deva Dutta ! that killing is not the sign of warriorhood ; but, on the other hand saving, rescuing, comforting him who may come face to face with doom and death.

DEVA DUTTA
You do not need to teach me the business of a warrior. It is like an ass trying to teach a lion his business.

(*Enter Yashodara with a chain of simple flowers*)

YASHODARA
Here, my Prince, in exchange for your necklace of pearl, I bring to you with trembling hands and heart overwhelmed with joy and gratefulness, this simple chain of flowers. Accept it, pray, and with it—me !

(*Siddhartha gently takes the chain of flowers and looks straight into her eyes in silence*)

DEVA DUTTA (*biting his lips*)
A chain of flowers ! A twisted rope, poor fool ! He'll be hanged yet, I lay a wager—he will !

(*Enter Yashodara's Charioteer*)

CHARIOTEER
I hope you do not mind my presence for a moment, lady !

YASHODARA
Not at all, not at all. Have you anything urgent to say ?

CHARIOTEER
Only this, Lady. Do you remember what I told you when the wheel of the chariot came off the other day, the day of the feast ?

YASHODARA
I don't. When the wheel came off ? O yes, yes ! I do remember one of the wheels of our chariot did come off when we were on our way to the feast. What did you say ?

CHARIOTEER
I said, Lady ! I said : when a wheel comes off a wedding comes off.

YASHODARA
And you were right !

BLACKOUT

SCENE NINE

(*Only the Announcer is lit up by a circle of light.*)

ANNOUNCER (*beating on his drum*)
The marriage celebrations of the Prince Siddhartha and Yashodara, the daughter of Dandapani of the Sakya Clan, have been fixed for the tenth day from this day. Forty thousand will be fed and clothed in the poor quar-

ters of the city. Await the happy day, the proud day, the day of rejoicing, one and all ! (*beating on his drum while the light fades out gradually and the curtain rises.*)

SCENE TEN

(*The curtain rises revealing a quiet chamber. The parrot is seen again inside the cage which hangs by a chain from the ceiling.*)

PARROT
I am hungry ! I am hungry !

SIDDHARTHA (*seated alone, lost in thought speaks slowly, to himself*)
You are hungry, poor bird ! So am I, so am I !

(*Enter Yashodara who, approaching, bends over him with great tenderness and devotion.*)

YASHODARA
A kingdom for your thoughts. Prince, what are you thinking ? What are you looking at, across space and time as it were ?

SIDDHARTHA
Nothing. Nothing at all.

YASHODARA
Come, shall we retire ? Come into our apartment, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA .
Later, later...yes, later, perhaps. Do you mind ?

YASHODARA
I would like to share your thoughts. Tell me, what are you thinking about ?

SIDDHARTHA
I was just thinking about your chain of flowers.

YASHODARA
My chain of flowers ?

SIDDHARTHA
Yes, and wondering whether it may not, some day, change into a chain of fire. Perchance your gift of flowers may turn out to be a gift of adamantine fetters in the end.

YASHODARA
You have already begun to look upon my love as a fetter.

SIDDHARTHA
Not so, not so. I only tremble to think that I may lose myself in your love and forget the world of humanity which is in such deep suffering and needs to be helped.

YASHODARA
All humanity loves you, Prince. It can never forget you.

SIDDHARTHA
Greater, then, would be the pity if I should forget humanity and it should remember me. Yet, in reality, people do not love me ; they love the wealth of which I am the symbol. Hundreds of vassals fold their palms before my wealth, not before me. Who, I ask, would have cared for me had I not possessed wealth ?

YASHODARA
I ! to me you are the only wealth in the world.

SIDDHARTHA
You are not the people whom we have made unconscious flatterers. You are—well, only the other side of me ; perhaps, the true side of me. There is no devotion in the love and respect the populace gives me. It is essentially enslaved by the show of my wealth, the pomp of my kingdom. And I ? What, in the end, am I ? The living symbol of that very enslavement in which I have bound them to my feet ? I have considered myself a master while being a slave all the time.

YASHODARA
What are you saying, Prince ?

SIDDHARTHA
Yes, yes, all I am saying is true. And all this show of falsehood I must support, before the eyes of the world, with a pose which deceives the credulous. I have surrounded myself with countless slaves, mere puppets of clay with no will of their own. O shameful, most shameful when one crushes the will of another. I, a man, fool all men when I fool myself. You call this life, Princess ! this hollow, fruitless, meaningless round of day-to-day existence based on crass and unblushing falsehood ? You call it life ? No, I am not merely a liar. I am a great big living lie... all the time, all the time.

YASHODARA
What are you saying ? If you be a lie then where, in the whole wide world, is there any place for truth ? (*breaking into a sob*) Alas, my Lord, I fear I am losing your love... so soon, so soon ! It is hardly a few months since I

became yours. I fear I may lose you ; and at this time, my Lord, you know. . . when a new life is about to happen in our home ; a little wonderful miracle, a little bright torch which makes itself felt in my womb.

SIDDHARTHA
If, by losing me, you find yourself, you will have found that which is the only thing worth finding ; and, finding which, you will truly find me, the real me whom you can never lose, Princess.

YASHODARA
Come, come. . . this bond of love shall not break. Tell me it will never break. Tell me this but once, only once . . . tell me.

SIDDHARTHA
The bond of our love shall never break, my Beloved, but the bondage of ignorance shall be broken. I cannot stand it any longer. The bondage of ignorance is a terrible bondage ; it hurts the bond of love.

YASHODARA
Your heart is clouded, Prince. That cloud shall pass. No stone shall be left unturned to gladden your life ; your time shall resound and shine with a cataract of music and colour ; your life shall find complete fulfilment. (*calls out to her Servant-Maid*) Mallika ! Mallika !

(*Enter Mallika*)

MALLIKA
Lady, did you call ?

YASHODARA
I did.

(*Mallika noticing the Prince prostrates before him*)

SIDDHARTHA
I should like, once and for all, to request you and all of you who are known as servants in our palace,—man-slave, woman-slave—all, all, to refrain from bending before me. No one was born to bend before another.

MALLIKA
The command of our great Prince shall be obeyed.

SIDDHARTHA
It is not a command. It is merely a request, the request of one human being to another. That's all. (*So saying, he slowly walks out.*)

YASHODARA
Mallika, have all arrangements been made in the Palace of Pleasure : musicians, dancers, acrobats ? Are they prepared with entertainment for the Prince ? What about the flowers, perfume, incense-gum ?

MALLIKA
Lady, everything is ready. The musicians and the dancers are busy rehearsing night and day ; the acrobats, too. May I have your leave to go now, Lady ?

YASHODARA
Yes.

(*Mallika bends before her*)

What did the Prince just tell you ? Not to bend again before anybody.

MALLIKA
Pardon me, it is an old, old habit coming down through generations. You know how strong an old habit is, Lady, and how weak we are.

BLACKOUT

(*The curtain goes down. In the darkness, music and the sound of bells is heard. The curtain, after a while, slowly rises on:*)

SCENE ELEVEN

(*A rehearsal room. An Elderly woman is seen instructing young dancers in the art of dance. Two or three palace servants look on.*)

ELDERLY WOMAN
And now, Girls ! you must forget that you are just mere dancers ; you are not only human creatures but powers that can allure. You must feel and become what you dance, and then alone you will be able to attract and hold. You, Malati, are to do a serpent dance this morning. Now, look ! this is the way. Look ! let your arms twine and twist and writhe and wreathe, thus . . . and suddenly make the heart of the Prince mad with enchantment; hypnotize him with your coiling boiling limbs . . . you get me ? You must be the last word on sinuousness, voluptuousness. Malati, are you ready ?

A GIRL
I will twine round his heart like a serpent ; but he has the power of changing a serpent into a creeper !

ELDERLY WOMAN
And you, Pushpavali, are to dance the dance of perfume extracted from a thousand flowers ; you must infuse madness into his blood, irresistible madness... And you, Vanamala, and you, Chandrakala, and you, Hematilaka ...come, let us have a final rehearsal.

(*The dance begins ; whirl of exquisite patterns. While the rehearsal is in progress and the dancers deeply lost in their dance, one Man, who has been watching, comes forward without a word and, stopping one of the dancers, takes her aside*).

THE DANCER
How dare you stop me. What do you want ?

THE MAN
I have been deputed here to see that all is well.

THE DANCER
That doesn't mean that you are to interfere with our work and prove a nuisance ?

THE MAN
I am sorry but I had to disturb you.

THE DANCER (*recognizing him*)
O, I see. You have been deputed. You are the so-called critic of art, aren't you ? Critics of art in our kingdom know precious little and talk a good deal.

THE MAN
Allow me to apologise. I am sorry. I would request you to kindly take the trouble of looking into your mirror, just once.

THE DANCER
I have often done that, Sir. And the mirror has felt very flattered to receive the reflection of my beauty.

THE MAN
But this time the mirror will tell you something which you have not, perhaps, noticed all these days.

THE DANCER (*looks into the little mirror in her ring*)
Why, it tells me nothing which I don't already know.

THE MAN
Find anything wrong with your hair ?

THE DANCER
I find everything wrong with your eyes ! But that is nothing new I am telling you. Critics' eyes can't see beyond their noses... so, kindly be off...

THE MAN
I wish to draw your attention to a grey hair on your head. It disqualifies you for the dance. The King has ordered that the eyes of Prince Siddhartha should never be allowed to see any trace of old age anywhere.

THE DANCER
I refuse to leave this room. I refuse to be thrown out of my group. I have worked hard for months and months and now I am not going to budge from my position. I shall dance before the Prince ; I must dance and nobody in the world is going to stop me.

(*The Man tries to hold her wrist*)

THE MAN
It is no use resisting. I ask you with courtesy to leave this room without ado. Or else, I shall have to order the guards to interfere.

THE DANCER
I am not afraid of the guards ; I am not afraid of anybody. I shall go straight to the Prince and tell him.

(The other Dancers stand stunned. The Elderly Woman comes towards the Dancer and slowly leads her out of the room.)

(Curtain)

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

(In the Vilasa Griha, palace of pleasure. Siddhartha is being entertained by dancers. Yashodara is seated by his side. The Court Poet, too, is present. On a lower seat, just in front of the Prince is Channa, the Charioteer.)

(Musical instruments play in unison by way of accompaniment. The dancers dance, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups of two, three, four, five and six.)

SONG
The boughs of the forest are beautiful
Whether day dawns or dims,
But far more beautiful, beautiful Prince!
Are your proud and princely limbs.

The twilight-star shines jewel-wise
In the spaces when the day dies,
But O the twilight star grows pale
Before your beautiful eyes.

Sweet Warrior Prince! the forest shall stir
To the hurtling of your darts
But already O Prince! your arrows of love
Have pierced and wounded our hearts.

YASHODARA
The dancer yonder is like a whirlwind, isn't she, Prince ?

(*Siddhartha just nods absent-mindedly and says nothing. He is obviously far away.*)

And that one there... see her ? She looks like a lotus, the way she opens out the petals of her grace. And look at that one's arms—like wonderful twining serpents.

SIDDHARTHA (*waking up from a trance with a start*)
Serpents. Yes, O yes... serpents.

COURT POET
Serpents with jewels on their hoods, Prince.

YASHODARA
The Prince seems tired already.

SIDDHARTHA
No, no... I am not tired... My heart is, perhaps.

COURT POET
Prince ! you seem somewhat sleepy.

CHANNA (*gets up and adjusts the pillow behind his Master's head*)
That's better.

SIDDHARTHA
Sleepy! O no... no... not a bit, not a bit. I have never been more wide-awake.

COURT POET
You seem like a sleep that is ever wide-awake ; and, may I add, a wakefulness that seems asleep.

SIDDHARTHA (*smiling*)
You are, after all, a poet.

COURT POET
And you, Prince, are a poem !
(*Throughout this scene the dance and music continue*)

YASHODARA (*to Channa*)
Channa! what has happened to the Prince ? I grow nervous.

SIDDHARTHA
Perhaps, we could now be left to ourselves. The dancers may retire.

YASHODARA (*stopping the dance with a sign of her hand*)
The entertainment may now be ended. The Prince is tired.

SIDDHARTHA (*with kindness*)
Beautiful dance ! You shall all be rewarded handsomely. I thank you. (*The Dancers and Musicians retire*)

COURT POET
Prince, you would now, perhaps, like to witness feats by our royal acrobats ?

SIDDHARTHA
Not today, not today.

COURT POET (*after a long pause*)
Prince, don't you ever feel you are falling in love ?

SIDDHARTHA
Falling in love ? I don't believe in falling at all.

COURT POET
I am sorry. I haven't put it quite correctly. Have you never loved deeply ?

SIDDHARTHA
O yes, I do love. I love with warmth.

COURT POET
How happy your royal parents will be to hear you say that.

CHANNA
O Poet ! you understand my Master so little.

COURT POET
I understand. So, that is why you are always so silent. But why need you fear ? You have only to give the word and the world shall be yours.

SIDDHARTHA
What I love is difficult to secure.

COURT POET
Princess Yashodara is so beautiful, my Lord ! and you have already secured her.

SIDDHARTHA (*quietly*)
I love, love ! Love is everywhere. Look at the beauty of Nature; it is full of love; and if Nature had not been full of love, she could not ever have been beautiful.

COURT POET
You love Nature, then, my Prince ?

SIDDHARTHA
I love her beauty, yet, alas ! even she is tricky. She weaves desire along with her beauty. And that makes me sad and afraid.

COURT POET
Desire is beautiful, Prince. It is like flame, like flowers, like music, like fragrance, like....

SIDDHARTHA
Wrong desire is not beautiful. It leads to sorrow and, therefore, such desire is not beautiful. It makes one restless, therefore, it is not beautiful.

COURT POET
Look at the bird, for instance. It is full of the desire to fly across blue spaces; that is why the sky was made blue and the bird was given its wings.

SIDDHARTHA
How do you know that the blue of the sky was not made specially as a lure for the wings of a bird, to tempt it into flight. Possibly, after all, birds were given wings to test

the capacity of those wings to fold themselves and rest, resisting the blue spaces. How do you know that wings were given to the bird to fly ?

COURT POET
What a lovely thought. Yet, Prince ! youth is a different sort of bird, you will admit. It is the sort of bird which must fly...

SIDDHARTHA (*absent-mindedly*)
Fly away, you mean.

COURT POET
No... I mean, just fly and return to its nest.

SIDDHARTHA
Space and the sky are huge things, Poet. (*to Channa*) Is that not so, Channa ?

CHANNA
Very huge, my Lord ! and very attractive.

SIDDHARTHA
Once a bird like me should start flying, there would be no end to the flight. And no returning. No returning. (*smiles to himself*) I have been hearing a great deal about the beauty of the forest: trees and trunks of trees and birds singing in their branches and the wind blowing through them making the trees their musical instruments. And the trees stand against the sky; and the sky, our singers sing, and so have you sung, Poet, is dappled with strange clouds and coloured with heart-enchanting light. I have never been allowed to go out of the palace even once. If your songs and the songs of our singers be so beautiful about the forests, I wonder how beautiful the

forests themselves must be with their colour and light and shade. I should like to pay a visit to a deep forest. I should.

CHANNA
Surely, Prince. The King, your father, would be delighted to learn of your new interest. Besides, Deva Dutta, your cousin, is a great shot and you could both of you have a competition and test as to which of you is the better marksman.

SIDDHARTHA
I don't enjoy holding the bow at all. It seems so stupid to recall the days when I went through a training in archery. What for ?

COURT POET
To kill wild animals and enemies, the *dharma* of the true *kshatriya.*

SIDDHARTHA
Kill ! O that word again. I remember to have heard it for the first time in childhood from Deva Dutta. It is an ugly word. Enemy ? Fancy one man calling another an enemy. What a curious world we are living in, Channa.

BLACKOUT

COMMENTARY (*on the mike*)
The King Suddhodana has been told of the Prince Siddhartha's desire to visit a deep forest. He has ordered that the chariots be made ready and asked Deva Dutta to conduct him to the forest and lure him into a hunt, so that he might begin to get interested in things which suit a warrior.

SCENE TWO

(*The curtain goes up and reveals Siddhartha where he was in the previous scene. He is alone.*)

DEVA DUTTA (*rushing in*)
Come, sweet Cousin. Chariots are waiting. My chariot and your chariot; my charioteer and your charioteer Channa—or rather, your *friend*, Channa. Arrangements have been made for a hunt and men have gone on before us to get ready for a beat. The *machans* are ready, so there can be no fear. I kill tigers at the distance of a few yards; and, standing face to face with wild boars, I just grip the crooked horn on their snouts and crack them into two. (*laughs heartily*). This is to be your first experience, I know; so you can't afford to risk facing wild beasts all at once. You'll be able to do so slowly, after a little more practice. I am so glad you want to go to the forest at last. And, well—here is a bow sent by the King, your father.

SIDDHARTHA (*dreamily*)
I prefer a rain-bow.

DEVA DUTTA
Prince, what a poetic thought. Surely, you don't intend stealing the bread out of the mouth of the Court Poet ? And, surely, you do not think you can kill a wild beast with a rainbow ? Come, now, come.

SIDDHARTHA
I am coming. (*going off into a sort of drowse*)

DEVA DUTTA
I am waiting. You are always dropping into a sort of

drowse. Shows bad health. The royal physicians will set you right. I must tell your father about your disease. But, truly, I think you will be cured of this most unwarriorlike complaint when you have once killed a tiger or a bison. At the start a duck or an antelope wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

SIDDHARTHA
I am coming. I am coming.

(*The curtain slowly goes down*)

SCENE THREE

(*And now before the curtain we find Siddhartha and Channa; the stage is very dimly lit.*)

SIDDHARTHA
Our cousin Deva Dutta has evidently gone on ahead of us. It is good that our horses should rest awhile, tethered to yonder banyan tree. (*The light increases and pointing in to the distance, in the direction of the side wing.*)
O look, look! How white those cranes are. Like great thoughts. Those cranes. Pure white thoughts.

CHANNA
Look, look, look...a wounded crane... can you see ? It is fluttering down to earth, bleeding in one wing.

SIDDHARTHA (*rushes out of the stage and returns with a wounded bird. Tenderly stroking it*)
What's this ? What's this, Channa ? Whose arrow is this ? O poor little creature ! (*draws the arrow out*)

CHANNA
Prince, let it lie on the ground. Let it lie there. It is only a little bird, that's all.

SIDDHARTHA (*looking into Channa's eyes with sadness*)
Did you say it was only a little bird, only a little bird? Did you say that?

CHANNA
A bird was made for an arrow, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
That is the hard philosophy we have built up to satisfy our lust to kill, to hurt. Channa! only a little bird... did you really say this, being my friend? But a bird has life and all that lives is sacred.

CHANNA (*lowering his eyes in shame*)
I am sorry, Prince. I should not have said it.

SIDDHARTHA (*addressing the bird*)
Poor creature! how it must burn and hurt you. (*Siddhartha tears a piece out of his garment*)

CHANNA
What are you doing, Prince? spoiling your royal raiment!

SIDDHARTHA
So, my royal raiment means more to you than a living creature. Channa, is that so?

CHANNA (*with downcast eyes*)
I am ashamed of myself.

(*Here Deva Dutta rushes in.*)

DEVA DUTTA
Where is it ? Where is my prize ? It dropped here, somewhere. I saw it drop. My dart pierced it. I tell you I saw it dropping...here, somewhere. Where is it, Channa?

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta !

CHANNA
Sir, you have hurt the Prince.

DEVA DUTTA (*scornfully*)
O I see ! So, the prince was the crane, after all. I shot at the crane and the Prince got hurt !

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta !

DEVA DUTTA
I am sorry I did not know that Your Excellency was a crane.

SIDDHARTHA
Stop mocking, Deva Dutta. You have so soon forgotten the tournament and what I told you after I won it.

DEVA DUTTA
Stop blabbering, Siddhartha! I don't wish to be reminded of that tournament where you behaved like a rotten cheat and won over the spectators before you won the tournament. O we are thoroughly acquainted with your tricks by this time. You still pretend to be a warrior. Where is my bird ?

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta, this bird now belongs to me.

DEVA DUTTA
I shot it.

SIDDHARTHA
I rescued it.

DEVA DUTTA
My arrow pierced it.

SIDDHARTHA
My hand extricated that arrow.

DEVA DUTTA
He who slays is the rightful owner of the thing he slays.

SIDDHARTHA
He who saves is the rightful owner of the thing he saves.

DEVA DUTTA
Now don't exasperate me. I tell you, Siddhartha, I made the crane drop and it is, therefore, mine.

SIDDHARTHA
I lifted it up again and so it is mine.
One who gives life is greater than one who takes it away.

CHANNA
My Lord ! why not give the bird to your cousin and be done with it.

SIDDHARTHA
O Channa Channa! even you don't understand me. (*Strokes the bird tenderly. The bird slowly revives*)

DEVA DUTTA
Chi ! you are a coward. You have always been one. Even when you were a boy you showed signs of cowardice. When I broke the head of your toy-elephant you should have broken mine. But you were a coward. What would you do in a real war, I wonder, when streams of human blood flow freely and weapons clash and flash and blind and make earth one mass of bloody clay; when poisoned darts rain like fire and human bodies lie like shattered flies on battlefields : what would you do then, I wonder ! Stroke every dead body tenderly, I suppose, imagining it will come back to life. Fool !

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta ! I wish to tell you once and for all, that if killing and hurting make one a warrior, a *kshatriya*, I refuse to become one. I hate hate ; I love love....

(*The bird is reviving in Siddhartha's hand*)

CHANNA
A miracle ! look, look, Sire ! a miracle.

SIDDHARTHA
The touch of love does make the dead live again.

DEVA DUTTA (*biting his lips in anger*)
We'll see. We'll see. You shall have to pay for this.

(*He goes out in a huff. The bird is released. It begins to fly and, flying, it disappears slowly.*)

SIDDHARTHA
Look, Channa ! look. It flies away.

CHANNA
A miracle, my Lord !

SIDDHARTHA
There....it flies away. I wish to fly away like that. I shall. Some day....some day !

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

(*The curtain goes up on a private chamber in the palace. Channa and the King Suddhodana are seen discussing Siddhartha.*)

KING
What is to be done now, Channa? You are both his friend as well as his charioteer; you are constantly with him. The only one he seems to talk to or cares to meet at all, is you. Tell me, Channa, do you find a change in him ?

CHANNA (*quietly*)
A great change, Sire.

KING
For the better ?

CHANNA
From the Prince's point of view, yes. He wishes to free himself from what he constantly refers to as the bondage of suffering.

KING
Leaving us in our own ?

CHANNA
No, my Lord ! that's just it. He talks of wanting to free both himself and the world.

KING
Conceit. Besides, I ask, what suffering can he have? We have built him three palaces: one for the summer, one for the cold season and a third for the season of rains.

CHANNA
Palaces do not interest him. They never interested him.

KING
And women ?

CHANNA
To him they seem only puppets of painted clay.

KING
And slaves and servants and vassals ?

CHANNA
To him they are free men and equals sharing one self-same suffering, which he is aching to conquer. He has ordered them not to bend before him again. He has been preaching to one and all that bending the knee is unnatural and an insult to life.

KING
He is out to dislocate the whole system which tradition has established in our kingdom and on which our kingdom has been established. He is a rebel. He evidently wants to create dissension for us by preaching indiscipline.

CHANNA
Sir ! he seems to be a born revolutionary.

KING
A revolutionary is dangerous to existing codes and customs. And—had it not been for the fact that he was my son, I should have had him exiled long ago.

CHANNA
Perhaps he is thinking of saving you the trouble. He may exile himself very soon. You never can tell.

KING
Exile himself?

CHANNA
Sooner than your Majesty thinks.....

KING (*perturbed*)
No, Channa! I charge you to look after him and see to it that he isn't reckless. I have tried out all avenues of approach, I have done all it is humanly possible to do to wake him up to a sense of responsibility, but I have failed. I confess to have failed most miserably. I have lost him.

CHANNA
If you don't lose patience you will not lose him and he will not be lost. This much I guarantee, my King!

KING
Channa! dearest friend of my Son! what is all this kingship worth except in terms of his ruling it in the future? He, the apple of my eye, the hope of our people, the light in our darkness: does he spurn a kingdom, considering it to be a mere lump of dirt?

CHANNA
My Lord! he is the hope not only of our people but of

the peoples of the world; he is the light in their darkness and will evermore be. Centuries will pass, but his light shall shine ever and ever. Hush...here he comes. Look !

KING (*looks at him almost as in a trance*)
He hardly walks like a human being. He seems blown by the wind of the spirit, the quiet way in which he glides, not walks.

CHANNA
He does not walk on earth, my King ! He walks above it.

KING
I had better leave the chamber and leave him with you. I shall overhear your conversation from behind the curtain.

(*The King retires behind a curtain and listens, unseen by the Prince*)

CHANNA (*approaching Siddhartha*)
Prince! why are you always so silent?

SIDDHARTHA
Am I? It doesn't strike me that I am silent. In fact, inside the heart the thought of freeing myself from bondage is so loud that it hardly lets me be silent.

CHANNA
Inside my heart there is a thought that is equally loud.

SIDDHARTHA
What thought?

CHANNA
That you have never given a chance to the people of the city to see you.

SIDDHARTHA
What is there to see? Is my face peculiar?

CHANNA
A peculiar question, Prince. The people are longing to see your face. They are your earth and you are their cloud of compassion.

SIDDHARTHA
Well, if the people really want to see me, I must yield to their wish. I belong to the people; I am of the people. But I must be worthy of the people. I must save them from unhappiness and suffering and....of course, ignorance. Otherwise, I am a traitor.

CHANNA
The people will be excited to see you. They will get a new lease of life.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

(Before the curtain the Announcer with the drum appears, starting to beat on his drum and announce in the darkness. The forestage is lit slowly.)

ANNOUNCER
Clear the roadways. Construct tall arches. Let horsemen rush from end to end of the kingdom and bear the great news.

(A crowd of men, women and children begins to encircle him.)

The Prince Siddhartha will, for the first time, pass through the city tomorrow. Special invitations have been issued to the gentry to join in the procession. The Prince will pass through the city tomorrow when the shadow of the king's tower touches the tower of the temple (*beats wildly on his drum.*)

AN AFFLICTED PERSON
May the Lord bless him.

ANOTHER
May he have long life.

AN OLD WRINKLED MAN
To think these eyes will catch a glimpse of the Prince before they close forever.

A LIMBLESS FELLOW
We shall see him at last! We shall see him at last.

A DIRTILY CLAD WOMAN
O wonderful day ! Tomorrow, O tomorrow ! what a wonderful day you are going to be. They say the Prince is a lover of the poor, an idol of true compassion. O wonderful day! Come soon.

(*There is the sound of a thud offstage*)

FOUR MEN (*rushing on to the stage*)
O, O, O ! our Lallu is dead. He died while building an arch, the tallest of the arches. He fell off from the height of the arch and dropped and died instantaneously.

VOICES
He will go straight to heaven.

Lucky man! to have died while building an arch for the Prince.
He died in the service of the Prince.
Yes, but he will not see the Prince. He did not live to see the Prince.
We are lucky. We shall. We shall.
Go on! it is far luckier to die serving the Prince than to live without serving him, even though we may see him.

ANNOUNCER (*beating more and more wildly on his drum*)
Here is the most important announcement I have ever made in all my life of thirty-five years, seven months and three days! (*the crowd assembles closer to listen*)
The dead, the maimed, the afflicted, the blind, the sick, the aged...all these shall be shut out and kept strictly away from the path of the Prince. Now, let me repeat: the dead, the maimed, the afflicted, the blind, the sick, the aged....

(*The crowd is mostly composed of such persons. They are pale with grief. One by one, without a word, they go out, knowing full well that they stand no chance.*)

It is the royal command that it is to be a pleasure excursion and the poor and the sick and the dead and the aged have no place on the occasion of such an excursion. It is the royal command that the Prince shall gaze only on youth and strength and life and beauty; no wretchedness and disease shall be allowed to pollute the Prince's eyes. That is the command issued this day by the great and generous King Suddhodana.

(*Beating on his drum the Announcer goes out*)

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

(The curtain rises. The stage grows dim and now bears a strange uncanny atmosphere created by half lights and brooding shadows out of which seem to appear large-sized masked faces of strange uncanny beings. These masks may be dimly visible against a black back-cloth, so dimly visible that you feel them more than see them.)

STRANGE VOICES ON MIKE (*in uncanny whispers*)

1st VOICE
Siddhartha is to go through the city today for the first time.

2nd VOICE
Ever since he was born, his father, the King, has kept him virtual prisoner in huge and lovely palaces.

3rd VOICE
But who can keep the consciousness of man prisoner ?

4th VOICE
We must see to it that Siddhartha gets to know the truth of life as it exists; not merely the beauty of it, but the ugliness, too.

5th VOICE
Not merely the softness of it, but the hardness, too.

6th VOICE
The King has ordered that all the streets be cleared of the last trace of misery and gloom and affliction.

7th VOICE
We have it in our power to create just what the King wishes to avoid for his Son.

1st VOICE
An old man.

2nd VOICE
A sick man.

3rd VOICE
A corpse.

4th VOICE
I shall cause an old man to come before the Prince's path.

5th VOICE
I shall cause a diseased man to come before the eyes of the Frince.

6th VOICE
And I shall cause a dead body to pass before his chariot.

7th VOICE
Last but not least, I shall bring the Prince face to face with one whose influence shall work on him and help him to conquer both himself and the world.

(The masks disappear. In the dimness of the stage we now see long uncanny hands stretching pallidly as if performing some uncanny rites to the sound of incantations on the mike.)

CHORUS

Old man, come!
Come from nowhere, into somewhere.
Come, come, old man, come!
Wrinkled body, toothless gum....
Come........

Come, O creature of disease,
Falling fingers, dropping toes,
Bleeding sockets, oozing nose,
Let the young Prince realise
You have stinking wounds for eyes,
Come, come, mournful creature
Out of nowhere into somewhere.

Dead man, once to some one dear,
Come from nowhere into somewhere
And appear
Before the Prince and let him know
Life is this and life is so...
Dead man, come!

Mendicant, it is your turn
To come from somewhere into nowhere...

Let him see your eyes that burn
Clear and bright, clear and bright
Since you have renounced the night
And have leaped into the light,
Teach the young Prince what you know,
Gleam and glow, gleam and glow...
Out of nowhere into somewhere,
Out of somewhere into nowhere,
Ho ho ho!

(*Voices in unison. Ho ho ho! ho ho ho!*)

BLACKOUT

A NOTE
(This scene could even be worked out on the lines of the famous Witch Scene in Macbeth. Only, these are not witches but supernatural personalities or beings to whose care the manoeuvring of the world has been entrusted.)

(In the darkness the commentary on the mike off-stage)

COMMENTARY
The Prince is to pass through the city for the first time in his life. The roadways are beautifully decorated, streamers float everywhere, banners bearing inscriptions in golden letters, are licking the air like tongues. Throngs of people who seem strong, young, well-fed and happy. Nowhere do we see any trace of old age or disease—and certainly not even the shadow of the shadow of death. On this happy occasion nothing which may lessen the height to which colour and excitement of celebration have reached shall be allowed to creep in. The Prince must be given the impression that life is nothing but a cataract of happiness and glory, love and loveliness. (*conches blow*) Hear the conches blowing. (*elephants trumpet*) The trumpeting of the royal elephants , (*rattle of chariots*) Here comes a golden chariot. It is the chariot of the Prince.

VOICE
Make way. Make way. Here comes the Prince.

VOICES
Handsome is not the word.

Looks like a cross between a moon and a sun.
Possesses the double quality of tenderness and strength.

(Men, women and children shout their lungs hoarse cheering the Prince. Music comes across the mike in waves. Also, chanting of priests and the blowing of dundubhis.)

SCENE SEVEN

(The curtain now rises on a colourful scene of crowds cheering the Prince who acknowledges their greetings. Behind, there are latticed windows out of which lovely ladies look and from time to time shower flowers on the Prince.)

CHANNA
See, Prince! how the people adore you.

SIDDHARTHA *(sighing deeply)*
I must deserve it.

(Suddenly, as though from nowhere, rushes in a wrinkled old man)

OLD MAN
Prince! Prince! accept the blessings of this very old man. May long life be yours.

(A fierce Guard rushes towards him and tries to get him out of the way)

GUARD *(handling him roughly)*
Out of the way, you fool !

ANOTHER GUARD
And where the devil has this old nuisance come from?

(*They try and push him out with all their force, when Deva Dutta rushes on the scene*)

OLD MAN
Alas, alas! don't hurt me and on such an auspicious day. I am old, very old. Be kind to me, Brothers! don't hurt me.

GUARDS
Hold your tongue.
Don't shout. You may be old but your lungs are not.

DEVA DUTTA
What's happening here?

A GUARD
An old fellow, wants to see the Prince.

DEVA DUTTA
Well, it isn't wrong that he wishes to see the Prince.

ANOTHER GUARD
But it is wrong that the Prince should see him.

DEVA DUTTA
Your logic is the logic of asses. What business have you to manhandle him. Have you any sense left in your coconut?

GUARDS
We are the guards of the King; we are the special guards of the Prince Siddhartha on this particular day.
We have been asked to guard the procession and save it from ugly sights.

DEVA DUTTA
Ugly sights. Look at yourselves in the mirror. Idiots! And if you are the guards of the Prince you should be ashamed of yourselves. Don't you know that the Prince hates violence? He can't bear to hurt a bird or a squirrel. Don't you know that your Prince is more tender than a petal and more frail than a dragonfly?

GUARDS
Kindly don't come between us and our duty.
We are the Prince's guards and there's an end of the matter.

DEVA DUTTA
You are not guards but blackguards. Who gave you the order to rid the roadway of an old man?

GUARD
The King Suddhodana.

DEVA DUTTA (*laughing*)
The old King, you mean, who looks young because he dyes his hair. So does the Queen, for that matter! (*laughs very loud to attract the attention of the Prince. Then, raising his voice*) You shan't touch this old man. Not as long as I have strength in my sinews and I have strength enough to punch your noses into blobs of jelly! Everybody has a right to see the Prince. Everybody.

SIDDHARTHA (*drawing close*)
What's happening yonder, Channa. Deva Dutta seems to be in a mortal rage.

CHANNA
When was he ever not in a mortal rage, Prince? It is nothing new. He cannot live without quarreling.

SIDDHARTHA
Deva Dutta! What's the matter?

DEVA DUTTA
Prince Siddhartha, my own great Cousin! you will confess, I suppose, that you have never made any difference between one human being and another?

SIDDHARTHA
Of course, you are perfectly right.

DEVA DUTTA
If that be so, I suppose that old man yonder has every right to see you, as much as every other person in the kingdom has?

SIDDHARTHA
Is there any doubt? Where's the poor man who wants to see me?

DEVA DUTTA
Your guards have given him a sound thrashing and....

SIDDHARTHA
That's wrong. Nobody in the world has a right to touch another in anger. Anger is a serpent.

DEVA DUTTA
They are trying to turn him out.

SIDDHARTHA
They'll do nothing of the sort. Channa, let me see him.

OLD MAN (*coming forward*)
Long live our compassionate Prince Siddhartha!

DEVA DUTTA (*to one of his Friends*)
The game starts now. What a fool the King was, wasn't he, to think that he could keep the Prince shut out from the hideous truths of life. (*laughs*)

SIDDHARTHA (*scrutinizing the old man*)
Channa! his skin is wrinkled like the bark we saw in the forest the other day. His eyes have no light left in them. Is he the only sorrowful being in the whole kingdom?

CHANNA
I don't know what to say, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
Poor sad being!

OLD MAN
May you be blessed, generous Prince. I have seen you. I can die contented now.
(*He goes out slowly*)

DEVA DUTTA
Prince, my royal Cousin! do not be misled by all this window-dressing your father, the King, is responsible for. He knows you are tender-hearted; he did not wish that you should see the other side of life.

SIDDHARTHA
The other side of life! Has life two sides to it?

DEVA DUTTA (*laughs*)
You have the innocence of a ten-year-old babe! Channa, tell him.

CHANNA
Life has two sides, Prince. The bright and the dark.

To the bright side belong the pleasures and the jewelled sights with which you are surrounded in the palace. To the other side, the dark side, belongs old age....such as you just saw—and....

DISEASED MAN (*suddenly appearing*)
Long live the great Prince Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA
What's that, Channa! Yet another sorrowful creature!

CHANNA
This, too, belongs to the other side of life, the dark, the very dark side.

DEVA DUTTA
That's the way the Prince will be educated. Go ahead. Destiny! you are stronger than all men put together. The Prince is receiving true education for the first time in his life.

(*Laughs and looks on at the spectacle*)

SIDDHARTHA
Look at his fingers. They have dropped off. There are no fingers to look at! And his eyes are two large red wounds. He is blind.

DEVA DUTTA
Not blinder than you have been all these years.

DISEASED MAN (*approaching Siddhartha*)
I cannot see the Prince but I can feel him glow like a great big lamp. O may he have long life.

SIDDHARTHA
And what a voice! It seems to be coming out of a bleeding hollow, the hollow of a grave which is one large wound. Channa! as he approaches me he seems to stink. He is all stink. What's happened to him?

(*Flowers are showered from a window*)

Not all the flowers of the world can cover up the stink which fills this poor man's body.

CHANNA
Sire, he is what is called diseased.

SIDDHARTHA
Diseased.

CHANNA
He will not live long.

SIDDHARTHA (*like an echo*)
He will not live long . . . In the midst of rejoicing and merriment, this awful sight! Is this the reception a Prince gets usually? By the way, Channa, did you say something about his life? He will not live long, you said. What did you mean?

(*A corpse is taken past to the chant af the Lord's name.*)

CHANNA
You see that, Prince ?

SIDDHARTHA
A queer thing to become. A man asleep on a narrow bed, a narrow little wooden bed! Seems that he is performing a sort of balancing feat.

CHANNA
That is called a corpse, Prince. He is dead and will never rise again. That's what the diseased man will soon become; that's what everybody must sooner or later become.

SIDDHARTHA
Everybody!

CHANNA
Unfortunately, yes.

SIDDHARTHA
Dead. What a terrible thing it must be to die. Dead. What is death? I must know.

DEVA DUTTA
Before that, I suggest that you try and get to know as to what life is. There's time still for you to get to know what death is! Death is the other side of life. I told you life had two sides.

(*Laughs and mocks at him.*)

SIDDHARTHA
Channa, let us go back.

DEVA DUTTA
Coward. Unable to face the reality of life. Chi!

(*He goes out*)

SIDDHARTHA
I want to go back and hide somewhere from the world. Let us go back.

BLACKOUT

(*The crowds cheer but gradually their voices die down.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*On the forestage, Siddhartha and Channa*)

SIDDHARTHA
Channa, that old man.

CHANNA
He was young once.

SIDDHARTHA
Will all of us grow old?

CHANNA
You will live to a ripe old age, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
Is it supposed to be a great thing to become old and wrinkled and tired and sorrowful? Will you, too, grow old, Channa?

CHANNA
If I live up to old age; or, Prince, if I am ever visited by a sorrow I may not be able to bear.

SIDDHARTHA
And after we grow old, become like that man who was performing a balancing feat on that narrow palanquin of wood?

CHANNA
O no, no, Prince. You will have a magnificent funeral. Your palanquin will be of gold and it will not be narrow but wide.

SIDDHARTHA
Do the dead know the difference between wood and gold, narrow and wide?

CHANNA
Prince, why let gloomy thoughts disturb you?

SIDDHARTHA
I am not gloomy. I am only trying to face the truth. He is a coward who runs away from truth. That terrible thing with wounds for eyes? Do all men get like that?

CHANNA
Not exactly like that. But most men get diseased, some time or other. There are many sorts of diseases in the world, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
The greatest, it seems to me, is ignorance. I suppose disease is the penalty of life, price of the human flesh. Human birth is a sad thing so long as one doesn't understand why he was born. Funny! to think that I may get diseased some day, and that I shall grow old if I live long enough, and that, in the end, I shall ride, not Kanthak, my horse, but a horse of wood or—gold . . . as if there is much difference between the two.

CHANNA
Prince, you will never die. You were born to be immortal.

(*Enter a Mendicant, calm and wonderful to look at*).

SIDDHARTHA
What a wonderful being ! Who is he?

MENDICANT

Peace be on you, my Son! You will find a cure for human ills. You will conquer life and death. You shall not die in history. You shall live forevermore in the hearts of men. Ages upon ages will ring with your name. (*he goes out slowly*)

SIDDHARTHA

Ages and ages will ring . . . but will they ring like his voice? Channa! what a man!

CHANNA

He has renounced the world. He blessed you, Prince, and the blessing of a self-realised being never goes in vain.

SIDDHARTHA

Self-realised being! I shall follow in his footsteps. I shall. Peace is what he has found. I, too, shall find peace. But not just for myself. For the world, for mankind. Peace, Peace.

(*Channa and Siddhartha go out. Deva Dutta enters from the other side with friends*).

DEVA DUTTA

What an ass the King was! Just today all three sights which he had wanted the Prince's eyes to avoid seeing, all three together came before him as though by some divine dispensation.

A FRIEND

The King would say it was the dispensation of the devil.

DEVA DUTTA
The trick has been done and now Siddhartha will not rest. He will run away like a coward to a forest, if I know my cousin. He will run away from the kingdom leaving me a clear chance of becoming its ruler.

FRIENDS
Amen! We wish it with all our hearts, we do. Of course, we do. We want you to become the King of this kingdom.

DEVA DUTTA
You will be my Minister. And you, my Court Poet.

A FRIEND
But I can't write to save my life . . .

DEVA DUTTA
That's just the reason why you should become the Poet Laureate. A Court Poet need not be a poet at all ; it is enough if he is a sycophant.

(*Laughter all round*)

BLACKOUT

SCENE NINE

(*The curtain rises on a palace chamber. The King Suddhodana is seated very perplexed and most miserable. Siddhartha, the Prince, has come to take leave of him.*)

SIDDHARTHA
So, give me leave, my King, my father! give me leave to leave and look for peace. Peace is the foundation of all life, of all true and great living; without it, the world must needs go to pieces. I beg leave to go away, somewhere, anywhere, to look for peace. . . peace.

KING (*fuming with anger*)
Peace ! It is only a word, my Son! You are mad, stark mad if you think you are going to find it. Peace is a lie.

SIDDHARTHA
Peace is the only truth. All else is a lie. I cannot suffer any more.

KING
What suffering can you have, my Son! what suffering that makes you decide to leave us and go away. Are you thinking of going to a forest ? And do you think you can find peace there? If the forest could yield peace, then tigers and panthers would have found it long ago. You are mad, raving mad . . . that's what I think you are.

SIDDHARTHA
You ask me what suffering I have? Father, the suffering of the whole world weighs on me, lives in me and will not let me rest.

KING
He who made the world knows best how to look after it.

SIDDHARTHA
We have made the world, Father! you and I . . .

KING
Conceit!

SIDDHARTHA
To begin with, it is for us to see to it that the world on the surface, is made a fit place to live in, free of distinctions, affording equal opportunity to all men alike, exploding the myth of birth, driving away the last least form of tyranny; a world where there shall be no exploitation . . . yet—that would only be the start. I want the world to be freed of all suffering . . .

KING
You are just raving like a lunatic. You are a mad man, to think of taking such a responsibility on your shoulders which are still raw and young and inexperienced ; shoulders which, instead, should be carrying a lovely infant while you run about, playing at horse with him.

SIDDHARTHA
My shoulders are broad enough ; they are the shoulders of a warrior, thanks to you, Father. I am a fighter . . .

KING
You imagine you are. If you are a true warrior you will not think of running away from life.

SIDDHARTHA
I am a true warrior. I am not running away from life ; I am running towards it.

KING
You are going to meet death.

SIDDHARTHA
I am going to meet death in order to conquer it.

KING
Is there nothing which can dissuade you from your wayward decision?

SIDDHARTHA
There is. But I am afraid you will not be able to grant me what I ask for.

KING
Ask, and we shall give it to you, my Son.

SIDDHARTHA
Assure me I shall never grow old.

KING
Why ask for the impossible, my son?

SIDDHARTHA
Assure me I shall never catch disease?

KING
That is only a chance, and even if you should, there are the famous State Physicians to cure you.

SIDDHARTHA
And assure me that I shall never die.

KING
Son, you have made the most impossible requests.

SIDDHARTHA
Well then, your request that I should stay here is also

impossible. I am unable to believe life worth living, as most men seem to do. All this gaudy enjoyment: these jewels, these colourful waterfalls, peacocks, dancers, musicians, acrobats, excitement and thrill, tender relationship of father and son, wife and husband, brother and brother, son and mother . . . poses, mere silly poses, utterly foolish conventions! Who belongs to whom, anyway? How long shall we continue to live in a fool's paradise? I had rather die in a wise man's hell than live in a fool's paradise.

KING
What has happened to you?

SIDDHARTHA
Nightmare . . . nightmare. Yet the dream of real living seems to be starting for me. And this shall be followed by the true awakening.

KING
You speak like one in a trance.

SIDDHARTHA
I am not in a trance. I am thoroughly conscious.

KING
You have hardly been married a brief stretch of time to the beautiful Yashodara. I suppose you realise that she is with child. Is this the time for you to be thinking in the way you are doing? Any day now it may be born; any day . . . and you . . .

(*Enter Minister in excitement*)

MINISTER
King, rejoice! You are now a royal grandfather. A royal grandson has come into this world.

KING
O lucky lucky day! Siddhartha, you were right. The dream of life has now started for you . . . Rejoice!

SIDDHARTHA
Rejoice?

MINISTER
Prince, your royal father has spoken aright. The dream of life has started for you.

KING
The real dream of life . . .

SIDDHARTHA
To be followed by the true awakening.

MINISTER
One more link in the chain of the royal line.

SIDDHARTHA
One more chain of suffering . . .
(*He walks out slowly, deliberately.*)

MINISTER
Strange person the Prince has become; so unlike you, Sire.

KING
Very much like his mother who used always to be distant and far away amidst all the bustle and excitement of life.

MINISTER
Yet, King! it is bound to pass . . . this moodiness of his. A son is a new experience and changes the whole course of a young man's nature and attitude towards life. It makes a pessimist an optimist.

KING
You may be right, for all I know. He will possibly understand what a father feels for a son, when he feels for his own which he should do, if he is not entirely a misfit in this world. Young men lack imagination, especially nowadays. The bond of relationship of this nature is more stubborn than diamond.

MINISTER
And far more precious . . .

KING
In any case, have an announcement made of celebrations. Announce to the kingdom the glad news of the birth of our grandson. A hundred thousand beggars shall be fed . . . and clothed . . .

(*The curtain has slowly gone down on his last sentence. Before the curtain.*)

ANNOUNCER (*beating on his drum*)
O all ye inhabitants of the city of Kapilavastu! listen! today the kingdom rejoices that a grandson is born to King Suddhodana, in other words, a little Prince has been born to the Prince Siddhartha. A hundred thousand beggars shall be fed and . . . clothed . . . a hundred thousand . . . (*the voice fades out while he beats on his drum and goes out*).

(*Curtain*)

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE

(On the road, the Prince Siddhartha on his horse and Channa on his, riding side by side. They stop mid-stage.)

SIDDHARTHA
This is a quiet spot.

CHANNA
Yes, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
But my heart is unquiet.

CHANNA
You will grow quiet, Prince, when you begin to follow in the footsteps of the King, your father, and obey the law of kingship which is : to rule over loyal subjects such as we are, Prince. You will be quiet when you sit on your throne of gold and wear the jewelled diadem . . . for our sakes, if not for your own.

SIDDHARTHA
Channa! it is surprising that you don't understand me still.

CHANNA
I am sorry if I have offended you.

SIDDHARTHA
I shall not be quiet so long as I do not obey the dictates of my own deep heart. Mortal kingship is nothing

short of a lie. What is it compared with the kingship of self-mastery, the law of kingship you talk of ? Have you ever thought of the mighty inner law which binds all men, the law which alone makes all men free? (*suddenly catching sight of something in the distance*)
But, look! look at them, who are they?

CHANNA
They are the peasants who till your land, Prince. They are humming. Can you hear them?

SIDDHARTHA
O yes, and what plaintive voices. Let us go towards them . . .

BLACKOUT

(*The Prince and Channa appear on the stage which is now lit up revealing peasants at work.*)

SONG OF PEASANTS (*while they work*)

FIRST PEASANT

Hayyo ayyaho! ayya ayyaho!
Crack, crack, bended back!
Hayyo ayyaho!
Unless we bear fatigue and pain
And shed our tears like showers of rain
Earth will not yield her golden grain,
Hayyo ayyaho!

SECOND PEASANT

O ho! ayyaho! O ho! ayyaho!
Crack crack, alas alack!

O ho ayyaho!
Ploughshares work and time goes by,
Grass is torn and dead worms lie
For all that is born must surely die,
O ho ayyaho!

THIRD PEASANT

Yayhai! ayyahai. yayhai! ayyahai!
Dig hack, crush crack!
Yayhai! ayyahai!
Life is only a prison room
Where each one serves a sentence of doom,
For man is condemned in his mother's womb,
Yayhai! ayyahai!

(*The humming continues. Above the humming we hear Siddhartha and Channa*)

SIDDHARTHA

Did you hear what they chanted, Channa? these so-called common folk? But hush . . . let us hear more. . . (*he puts his forefinger on his lips and signs to Channa to be quiet.*)

PEASANTS (*resting awhile*)

Brother, do you know why our hands and feet resemble the earth ?

I know what our faces resemble . . .

They resemble nothing on earth (*laughter*)

Here's a conundrum. Why are our hands and feet like earth.

I bet my old sandals, the answer is because they are made of earth.

That's not very clever. Go on, and my answer is not half so dull.

Let's have it, then. Out with it, your pleasant wit !

Our hands and feet are like the earth because they are cracked and chapped and broken. See ?

(The peasants come together and examine each other's hands as well as their own.)

SIDDHARTHA
Do you hear what they are saying—that plain fellow there, with so much wisdom in his heart?

CHANNA
Peasants are interesting fellows, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
Not merely interesting, they are wise. They ought to be. They are all the while in touch with Nature. They are the children of the soil, the true nurslings of Nature untramelled by unnatural kingship and stupid code and custom. The land must feel so happy to belong to them.

CHANNA
Prince, the land is happy since it belongs to you; and they, your peasants, are happy to till it and sow it that harvests may swell and feed you . . .

SIDDHARTHA
How? I cannot see it. They toil and they till, they break the earth into grain and work out harvests. It is not merely rain that swells the corn, the wheat, the blades of rice . . . but the sweat of the peasant . . . you heard them say that.
See how they sweat! drops trickle down their backs burned in the sun and tired of bending. Sweat. That's the real rain which feeds our crops, yes, indeed; yes, Channa ?

CHANNA
According to a law of our kingdom, they must toil on lands which belong to you by right. You must not toil because you are a Prince, and your hands must always be kept clean.

SIDDHARTHA
Clean hands are not as urgent as a clean conscience, Channa.

(*Offstage, the horses neigh*)

CHANNA
Prince, our horses are getting restive. Let us return to the palace.

SIDDHARTHA
No. I wish to toil with them for a while ; I want to see how it feels to toil as they do.

CHANNA
Prince, it is unprincely to toil.

SIDDHARTHA
It is unmanly to live on others' toil.

(*Siddhartha approaches the peasants. Channa follows him. The peasants bend before the Prince*)

Why do you bend before me ? Surely, you are not blades of corn and I am not a scythe come here to mow you down?

FIRST PEASANT
O mighty Prince! we are unworthy to come within your shadow.

SECOND PEASANT (*whispering into his ear*)
Fool, can't you see that he casts no shadow at all?

THIRD PEASANT
O miracle! he is a god. Prince, you are a god.

SIDDHARTHA
You must not insult man by calling him a god. Come, let me hear you chant your song, a few lines of it . . . I overheard you a while ago. How does it go? Hayyo ayyaho! hayyo ayyaho!

(*The peasants chant the last verse together while the Prince takes up a crowbar and begins to dig to the rhythm*)

CHANNA
O Prince! you are out to break through all convention laid down by the State.

SIDDHARTHA
Convention? Often it is the invention of the devil. (*tired, puts down the crowbar*) O what a thing it is to toil. I am already tired. Yet, how these peasants, our toiling brothers, go on and on, in the rain, in the sun, without complaining.

CHANNA
Would it not be pleasant, Prince, to rest awhile in the shade of yonder jambulanam tree?

SIDDHARTHA
I should like to (*walks towards it and sits down under the tree. Channa and the peasants stand at a distance. The stage is dimly lit. A spot-light on Siddhartha, lost in meditation.*)

FIRST PEASANT
He seems rooted in a dream.

CHANNA
Hush, let him rest.

(*A Mendicant, the same as appeared to him earlier, appears as if from nowhere*)

MENDICANT
Siddhartha !

SIDDHARTHA (*open his eyes*)
You again?

MENDICANT
I come to remind you that you will grow immortal, master of the self and the lord of peace and compassion. Time is fleeting. Conquer yourself. You will then conquer the world. Conquest which rests on a self that is unconquered is shaky and unreal. It topples and falls to bits. Time is fleeting.

(*He vanishes*)

SIDDHARTHA (*rising*)
Channa!

CHANNA
Here I am, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
Let us return to the forest.

CHANNA
We are already in the forest, Prince.

SIDDHARTHA
I meant the forest called the world. It is a deep dark forest teeming with wild animals of desire and lust and

greed and falsehood. Panthers of greed, tigers of hate, bisons of treachery . . .

CHANNA
The King, your father, has had three palaces built for you. And besides, your new-born infant, who has been named Rahula after the dark planet Rahu...

SIDDHARTHA
Palaces? My infant? alas! one more victim added to the world of suffering ; and what palace-wall can prevent death from entering to claim its victims? Let us go.

(*A horse neighs offstage*)

That is surely my Kanthak's neigh. He will yet take me to salvation. (*He goes out with Channa. Then we hear his voice addressing Kanthak—on the mike —the peasants listen*)

You understand, yes, you understand. I understand that you do; I understand that from your neigh which is so friendly, so wise, so knowing. Kanthak, my sweet horse . . . I know you will lead me some day, some day to . . . salvation. Salvation for me and for you and for the whole world.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

(*Once again, the black back-cloth against which shadowy mobled figures crowd, scarcely visible, like to uncanny presences. Only their voices can be heard coming out of the darkness out of which they seem to be carved.*)

UNCANNY VOICES (*in swift succession*)
We must cast a spell on the palace and put its inmates into a deathlike sleep.
A sleep which shall resemble death, but wake up after twenty-four hours.
Nobody, not a soul, shall wake up before the Prince departs.
We must put a spell on Kanthak, the horse which loves to neigh, so that he should forget to neigh. He will bear the Prince away. Away, away to a distant destination. Without a neigh, without a neigh, away, away!
The gates of the city shall open on their hinges without the faintest sound and the sentries shall be in a dead sleep at the moment. And after the Prince has passed the gates, they shall close after him without a sound.
Oil their hinges well with our magic oil.
Help every way to lead the Prince towards the fulfilment of his great purpose, his great hunger, his great destiny.
Let us pack the air with our magic powders.

(*Uncanny music starts as though somewhere in the clouds, heavenly music to the humming of heavenly voices.*)

SCENE THREE

(*The curtain comes down and the forestage reveals two Sentries. It is dark.*)

FIRST SENTRY (*enters with a torch. A jackal howls in the distance*)

Night prowler feeding on the dead! O these jackals don't let the kingdom sleep, sometimes. They say: tie a knot

in your kerchief and they stop howling at once, the whole lot of them. A knot in a kerchief ties up their chorus, that's what they say. They feed on the dead. But a jackal is not worse than some men who feed on the living. That Deva Dutta fellow, for instance...

VOICE (*sentry's midnight password*)
BANSHEE

FIRST SENTRY (*replying*)
KALL OL!

SECOND SENTRY (*enters with a torch*)
Good lord! the air is growing thick with a blackish brackish fog. I can taste some sort of the salty powder; seems as though unseen powers are out to choke the kingdom with their magic powders! Soon your torch and my torch will not be able to see each other.

FIRST SENTRY
What a change has come over the kingdom since the Prince saw those three sights the King did not want him to see: the sick man, the old man and the dead man.

SECOND SENTRY
Anyway, the night is black and I feel choked as if I were losing my voice....And you?

FIRST SENTRY
I feel a weight on my lungs. I wonder if the oil which feeds our torches has a poison in it? It is disgusting, the sensation in my throat and in my lungs....I begin to feel a sick man, an old man and a dead man all rolled into one.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

(The curtain rises on the sleeping chamber of the Princess Yashodara. The cage hangs by a chain from the ceiling. The parrot is asleep. Yashodara too, is asleep with her little infant beside her. The marble basin in a corner receives the water drop by drop from a tap.)

(Enter Siddhartha, tiptoe.)

SIDDHARTHA (*soliloquising*)
So, this is the real nature of women as they are made by the world and society. How the dancers sleep in the hall. How they look when they relax. Their true selves. Sleep cancels will. The limbs loosen; the hair gets dishevelled, the mouth trickles with spittle. That's what I have just seen and come. Loathsome, impure...yet man, deceived by costume and ornament, succumbs to woman's lure. Woman. How hideous is the transformation of the body in sleep. All those women asleep in the hall resembled the corpse I saw the other day. How are they better, anyway?

(Waking with a start)

But where am I now?
In my own chamber. There she is; yet, how different. She looks like what she is: an angel, a spirit. And look at the little fellow: an innocent form brought into the world through ignorance.
Drop by drop, drop by drop, drip drip, O water from the tap. You resemble the tears of man. Hush. I must not wake up the Princess and her babe.

(Bends down and kisses Yashodara's feet and then, the child's cheek. Siddhartha does not say a word. He rises and swiftly walks towards the door. At this point he seems to hesitate.)

SIDDHARTHA
No, I must not look back. I must not look back. No...
(so saying he walks out of the chamber briskly)

BLACKOUT

(*Offstage, on the mike, in whispers*)

SIDDHARTHA'S VOICE
Channa! wake up. Quick.

CHANNA'S VOICE
My Lord! what has brought you here, so late at night?

SIDDHARTHA'S VOICE
My destiny. Quick. Fetch me Kanthak at once.

CHANNA'S VOICE
At this dead hour of the night?

SIDDHARTHA'S VOICE
The darkest hour for me, and yet, the darkest hour before the dawn. Come. I will find a way out of this falsehood called life—as men live it. Bring me my Kanthak. Fetch him saddled. You shall accompany me. Don't ask where.

(*The neigh of the horse*)

Good. Good. Are you ready?

CHANNA'S VOICE
But, my Lord, your father, your mother, your wife, your child.

SIDDHARTHA'S VOICE
Words...mere words. There is no time to lose. Time is fleeting.

(*Sound of trotting of horses*)

O Channa! I can breathe now. Out of the darkness into the light.

SCENE FIVE

(*They come forestage, the lighting is dim.*)

SIDDHARTHA (*gets off and strokes his horse*)
I have been told that my father, the king, overthrew his enemy in battle, mounting his favourite horse. But you, Kanthak, are my favourite horse. Act so that I, too, might overthrow my enemy, that I, too, might conquer. I am out to conquer, not man, but the enemy of man. Wrong desire. You understand? Untruth, hate, greed. O Kanthak, how grateful I am to you. And Channa, to you, as well! Peace...peace...peace for you and me and for the entire world!

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

(*In the darkness the whining of a dog somewhere, an uncanny, ominous whine. The curtain goes up and when the stage is lit it reveals the chamber of the King and the Queen who have obviously awakened by the sound of that bark.*)

KING
Queen, did you hear that sound? It sounded like the cry of some wandering spirit.

QUEEN
It is only the whining of some poor dog in the distant village.

KING
No no, it sounded close by; in fact, it seemed to come out of my sleep.

QUEEN
Your imagination has taken on a fever.

KING
I hope all is well. How horrible the whine of a dog can render the midnight. A whole graveyard seems to inhabit a dog's whine at midnight!

QUEEN
Go to bed, Sire! It is still the hour of the dead of night.

KING
It seems the hour of the dead. I am feeling strange. I am feeling as though I have already died and been gathered up among the dead.

QUEEN
Try and sleep a little more.

KING
A little more? Why, I haven't slept a wink. I have been awake, counting the moments drip like tiny drops of blood out of my own heart.

QUEEN
Why is your heart so troubled, my Lord?

KING
I cannot explain why. The human heart is a very strange invention of Nature, almost the most cruel invention, I am inclined to suspect.

QUEEN
You are evidently troubled about Prince Siddhartha.

KING
I am.

CHORUS

The hour is in flower,
The dark is withdrawn,
The sorrow of life is transformed to a power
Ample as dawn.

The moment is ripe,
No clamour, no rumble
Of loud celebration, no shrieking of pipe,
No clanging of gong, no beating of drum,
Since ripeness is wisdom and wisdom is humble.

The moment is ripe,
Stained with warm juices appears a new dawn,
Lust is bereft of its claws, the tiger is losing its
stripe,
Out of the fang of the serpent the bite is withdrawn,
No clanging of cymbal, no rumble of drum,
In ignorant grief, earth sobs: He has gone!
While the heavens in rapture chant: He has come!

QUEEN
Your Court Astrologer has cast his horoscope, and what a fine horoscope it has turned out to be, King! The Prince was born under a lucky star!

KING
Astrologers are liars who pretend to be in touch with

stars. (*the dog whines again*) O how dark it is tonight and how that dog cuts the darkness with its whine. Stars? There are no stars. . .and astrologers are dead!

BLACKOUT

(*Through the darkness comes the voice of Siddhartha*)

SIDDHARTHA'S VOICE
I will not return to you sad, beautiful city! my city of Kapilavastu! sad and lovely city!
I shall not return until I have gone beyond death and the misery of life, bringing back to you a message of peace. Nay, not only to you but to the whole world which needs it urgently and always.
Farewell to all sentient and insentient things. Farewell! until I bring to them all a message of true and everlasting release: until then, farewell!

SCENE SEVEN

(*On the 16 mm. screen faint dawning light; across the sky, a flight of white doves. Ethereal music sounds for a short space. the screen grows blank and the forestage is slowly lit up revealing Siddhartha, Channa and the horse, Kanthak.*)

SIDDHARTHA
Time is only a myth. How swiftly we have covered distance. Here we are: far, far away from the city of my birth, from the city of your birth, from the city of the birth of our horse, Kanthak. You have done me great kindness, both of you. . .you, Channa and you, Kanthak, two of the noblest of human friends I have had all my life.

This spot makes me feel a true warrior, and for the first time (*he unlooses his ornaments and hands them over to Channa.*) Here, Channa! take this jewel (*removing the crown from his head*) and this crown,—take them to my father, the earthly King, and with them give him a message, from me. With the jewel and the crown placed at his feet you must make repeated obeisance to him and give him this message:

> I have entered the penance grove to put an end to birth and death. Not from lack of affection, nor from anger have I left the palace and the family and the kingdom.
> You should not grieve for me, since I have left them all behind *with* a purpose and *for* a purpose.
> Tell him, Channa ! that I asked you to give him this message:
> I shall not return until I have solved the riddle of the inequality which exists in his kingdom—until I find the secret which brings about harmony between man and man, thereby making all men equal.

(*Channa weeps and does not say a word. Quietly he bears the jewel and the crown. Makes obeisance before the prince. Kanthak neighs while Siddhartha strokes its mane gently.*)

SIDDHARTHA

You must not weep. This is hardly an occasion for weeping. It is the moment which marks the victory of life over death. Farewell. . . .

(*The stage grows dim. Siddhartha goes out one way and Channa, leading Kanthak, the other.*)

CHORUS (*Enter*)

Alas! he has fled. Under cover of darkness he left us to weep,
The sun is veiled in sorrow and life on the earth grows dim,
His absence for us is a bitter and long farewell to sleep,
The kingdom is one red sleepless eye that is looking for him.
The deer of the forest, the birds of the air have lost all track
Of their speed and their flight—
An inky shadow, the shadow of death, has darkened the sun.
The clouds and waters cry out in deep anguish: Prince! come back!
Was it right, was it right
That you should have left us and fled in the darkness as you have done ?
Alas! he has fled. The cup of our sorrow is full to the brim,
The kingdom is one red sleepless eye that is looking for him.

BLACKOUT

CHORUS (*Exit*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*Fade in light, revealing the Announcer with the drum*)

ANNOUNCER

City of Kapilavastu! listen. The Prince is missing. A huge award of ten thousand *suvarnas* will be given to the one who traces out the prince and brings him back.

BLACKOUT

(*In the darkness a jumble of voices*); The Prince is missing. Alas!

Disappeared stealthily. A curse on our sentries. The Prince has gone mad. Channa, too, is missing. And Kanthak. They are in league. O O O!

(*While on the 16 mm. screen, we see shots of the parrot in the cage helplessly pecking at the bars. A rat gnawing at a drum, tearing its membrane. A spider weaving its web round a stringed instrument. A crowd of sobbing women going down a lane and other shots to show the neglect of music and pleasure in the palace since the disappearance of the Prince.*)

SCENE NINE

(*The screen grows blank and in the darkness a spotlight is turned on to Channa and Kanthak:*)

(*Kanthak neighs wildly and drops to the ground*)

CHANNA
Poor Kanthak! you are more a human creature than a horse. You feel as a human being does. I understand your agony. I wonder if you understand mine. Perhaps, we share the selfsame agony. But we shall not prove traitors to the great cause to which our Prince and Master has dedicated his life from this day. Arise, Kanthak! Come, now, Kanthak! you are not a coward! We are warriors, we who have served the greatest warrior of all.

(*Kanthak gets up and slowly begins to trot alongside Channa*)

BLACKOUT

(*In the darkness commentary, on the mike*)

COMMENTATRY
And now the city gates are visible. The sentries have

caught sight of Channa and Kanthak. Hear what they have to say.

SCENE TEN

FIRST SENTRY'S VOICE
Here they come, the horse and the ass.

SECOND SENTRY'S VOICE
You mean Channa, the ass, and Kanthak, the horse! hi hi hi! Traitors, both of them.

FIRST SENTRY'S VOICE
And I'll be hanged if they are not both hanged. What are they if not traitors! to have helped our dear Prince to have escaped from the kingdom.

SECOND SENTRY'S VOICE
He was our kingdom...not only our future King. (*Channa's voice "Open the gates"*) Can you hear the ass braying?

(*The stage is revealed as the curtain goes up in darkness; on either side of the stage is a sentry-box. Channa enters.*)

FIRST SENTRY
Well, Brother! you ask us now to open the gates. You did not ask us to open the gates when you fled like a coward, a thief, a traitor. You fool! you ass! you have cooked your own goose.

SECOND SENTRY
Now that we have opened the gates, kindly don't open your mouth. Nobody is going to believe a word of what you are going to say about what you have done.

CHANNA
Believe me....

FIRST SENTRY
You have proved a traitor; now don't make it worse by proving a liar. Where's that wonderful horse?

SECOND SENTRY (*pointing in the distance*)
There he is. Not less a traitor than our brother here. Everybody spoilt that wretched animal by calling him white as the snow of Himalaya and all that sort of rubbish. Appearances are deceptive, they say, and damn me if that isn't true.

FIRST SENTRY
But, 'pon my word! it is a mystery, all said and done. How could they have gone out of the city when the gates were bolted and barred?

SECOND SENTRY
And fastened with heavy padlocks bigger than the fists of giants. And the joke is that we hold the keys!

(*Drawing them from his waist-band*)

FIRST SENTRY
The way things seem to be going, padlocks seem more easily broken than wedlocks. (*laughter*).

SECOND SENTRY
The Prince has broken his wedlock easy enough . . .

CHANNA
Don't talk of the Prince with such levity, I tell you.

(*The neighing outside of Kanthak*)

SENTRIES
You have forfeited the right of taking his name.
Leave alone speaking up for him.

FIRST SENTRY
'Pon my honour, I say . . .

SECOND SENTRY
If either you or I have any honour left at all, after what has happened. We shall now be dismissed; we shall be accused of aiding and abetting.

(*Suddenly a huge furore and crowds stream in*)

CROWD-VOICES
Where is the Prince? Where is the Prince?
Where is the mighty Bull of the Sakya Clan?
O where? Show him to us. We want to see him.
Is this all a hoax? Is this a jest put across the whole kingdom?
Where is our Prince, our beloved Prince?
Traitors, you! We want our Prince back.
You, Channa! friend of the Prince! tell us, where is the Prince?

(*A little fellow leads Kanthak in jeering at him*)

Chi! look at this horse. Not ashamed of himself. They say it was he who took away our Prince!
Both Channa and Kanthak should be publicly executed in the public square! Justice! we want justice! Justice!

CHANNA (*standing beside Kanthak*)
Listen, angry crowds of Kapilavastu!

VOICES
Down with the traitor. We don't want to listen to his voice.

It is an insult to our ears to hear a traitor's voice. It does not ring true. It is filled with poison. It is packed with deceit.
Down with Channa, the traitor!
No, no. We must give him a chance to speak. He has a right to explain himself. He has a right to tell us what he has to tell us, that is, if he has anything to tell us.

CHANNA
By your leave, ye inhabitants of the city of Kapilavastu! Listen! I am not guilty.

VOICES
You are! You are!
Let him speak. Let us hear him out.

CHANNA
I am not guilty! By all that is holy, I am not guilty. And I swear this by the One who is the holiest of all holy things ever made by the Creator: the Prince himself. The Prince has now turned mendicant. I swear by him that I am not guilty. The Prince commanded us to bear him across weary leagues and we only obeyed him. The gods seemed to help him.

VOICES
Helped by two devils: you and the horse.

CHANNA
Kanthak seemed to sprout into wings and fly across the firmament covering an eight-day distance within a few hours.

VOICES
Have you ever heard such a fairy tale? (*mocking laughter*)

CHANNA
Believe me, ye people of Kapilavastu! it was a miracle. The gods seemed to be on his side. We were helpless. We left him at a lonely spot and he ordered us to return; and here we have returned, broken-hearted and dejected. Here is his crown and here the jewels he has sent back to the King, his father.

FIRST SENTRY
He is a fit case for the mental asylum.

SECOND SENTRY
They may not take him in. By contrast, the other lunatics would appear and feel sane and then, there would be no end of trouble. (*laughter*).

BLACKOUT

(*The surging voices of the crowds continue and fade out gradually.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

(*The light is on again and the stage reveals a chamber in the palace*)

YASHODARA
What is that? The multitudes shouting . . .

(*Mallika rushes in excited*)

MALLIKA
O Lady, Lady! only the charioteer Channa and the horse Kanthak seem to have returned.

(*Another Maid rushes in followed by yet another*)

MAID
The back of the horse is vacant.

ANOTHER
So the world is vacant, that's why. Alas! Lady! the Prince has not returned.

(*The voices of the crowds outside*)

YASHODARA
No, that can never be. The crowds would not have shouted as they are doing. They are welcoming the Prince back.

MAIDS
He has come! He has come! since the Princess says so . . .
O joy! joy! joy!.
We shall darken our eyes with collyrium all over again.
We shall paint our nails with henna.
And twine jewelled chains in our tresses.
I shall wear a necklace of pearl round my throat.
And I shall put on my anklet-bells and dance before the Prince.
O joy, joy, joy! we thought we had lost him.
How happy we are to think that we were mistaken.

(*Enter Channa downcast*)

YASHODARA
Channa! why do you come so haggard and downcast?

CHANNA
Lady! (*he falls at her feet*)

YASHODARA
The Prince has repeatedly told you all never to bend before anybody. Where is the Prince?

CHANNA
I don't know what to say, Lady.

YASHODARA
Where is the Prince?

MAIDS
Where is the Prince? O where is the Prince?

CHANNA
He has gone far, far away. He is no more a Prince. He is now a mendicant.

(*A crowd of servants comes in, sobbing*)

O he has gone, gone forever!
(*Rahul rushes in*)

RAHUL
Ma! were is father?

YASHODARA (*impulsively lifts him up and kisses him profusely*)
Little blossom! pearl of my womb! how shall we survive now that the sunshine has gone out of our lives?
(*Followed by Jester enters King Suddhodana, calmly. All stand back*)

KING
Nobody is to blame. The sage Asita Muni was right. The words of a sage are the seal of destiny.

JESTER
And the words of astrologers, my King, are full of density! hi hi hi!

YASHODARA
O O O! what have you done, Channa! (*The neighing of Kanthak is heard*)

(*Addressing Kanthak looking across side-wing.*)
You brute! You white brute, Kanthak! you who hide a black heart inside your white body! Have you a heart at all? You, heartless brute!

(*Wild neighing, offstage*)

You couldn't neigh the night you took my lord away from my side. You couldn't tear the darkness with your neighing to wake us up. You behaved like a treacherous brute.
You did. Downright treacherous, lecherous brute... hateful, ungrateful brute! Kanthak!

(*Turning to Channa*)

And what happened to you, Channa! you could at least have waked us up in time, in time to stop him. You are not dumb like Kanthak. You are not an animal. You possess a mouth which could have shrieked and waked us up. You could have shrieked and waked up the whole kingdom if only you had wanted.
You could have waked up the whole sleeping world.

CHANNA (*very quietly*)
The Prince has departed in order, one day, to wake up a sleeping world. Blame us not. Kanthak and I were helpless. We were helpless instruments in his hands. The invisible gods helped the visible God among men to go towards his goal. We were under a spell. Neither Kanthak nor I could utter a sound.

YASHODARA (*turning abruptly to her maids*)
And were you all dead when he left? And who opened the city-gates for them to pass? You... you... you! Send for the sentries who were on duty that night. You were all in league.

CHANNA
Lady, the gods were in league with the Prince, the God among men.

(The parrot in the cage shouts in terrible grief)

YASHODARA
O choke that parrot! I can't bear its shriek any longer.

A MAID (*goes towards cage*)
Shut up!

YASHODARA
Mallika! take Rahul to the nursery.
Go, dear! Mallika will play with you.

(Mallika takes Rahul away. Enter Two Sentries)

FIRST SENTRY
Salutations to the Princess.

SECOND SENTRY
To the Princess my salutations.

YASHODARA
How do you explain what has happened?

KING
Yashodara! it is nobody's fault. The sage Asita Muni said he would go away from us, and a sage is after all a divine seer.

CHANNA
Here, King! are the jewel and the crown he has sent back to you, his father. And with it, he has sent this message—

he said: tell my father, the earthly king, I shall not return until I have solved the riddle of the inequality which exists in his kingdom; until I find the secret which brings about harmony between man and man, thereby making all men equal.

KING
I shall engrave his message on the tablet of my heart.

(*He walks out slowly*)

YASHODARA
Jester! you need not remain here. Follow the King. He needs you to cheer him up.

JESTER
And you, Princess?

YASHODARA
I wish to be left alone with my sorrow (*jester goes out*) Sentries! I ask you. How did it happen?

SENTRIES
It is passing strange. I think Channa is right. The gods were in league with the Prince. We do not know how it happened. It is nothing short of a miracle.

YASHODARA
O fools! fools! you don't know what you have all done! O Kanthak! you have betrayed me! You don't know what you have done!

(*One last neigh and a thud*)

CHANNA (*looking offstage, rushes out*)
O O O ! Kanthak! Kanthak! you couldn't bear the

sorrow of separation from the Prince; you couldn't bear the accusation levelled against you. You are dead!

(*Comes back*)

Lady, Kanthak is dead!

YASHODARA

Dead? Luckier than we are!

(*Curtain*)

ACT SIX

SCENE ONE

SIDDHARTHA (*alone in a forest, addressing a tree. He is very pale and emaciated.*)

O tall silent tree! friend of my loneliness. How beautiful you are. If only men could learn to stand as quiet as you against the vast horizon of an understanding of existence. Silent under all circumstances. Untroubled by lightning, unruffled by thunder, unworried by changing weathers. Look at your smile! Yes, I understand. You smile at my state of mind which is restless. How bravely, how magnificently you lift up your boughs to the sky. As though you were worshipping some god beyond. Yet, there is no god greater than man. Alas, but men are so broken and troubled, and so forgetful of the truth all the time, all the time. I shall not rest until I have found a cure for the sorrow and the wretchedness of life.

(*Moves away from the tree and goes to another spot*)

How quiet, how very quiet. This forest understands peace. How unlike the kingdom I have left behind.

There is no strife here....only peace, deep deep unbroken peace.

(*Suddenly shocked at what he notices*)

What!

(*Helpless, intermittent croaking of a frog, as when it is caught in the mouth of a serpent*)

Peace! where is peace? Surely the world was not made by some heartless monster who enjoys himself through the pain of creatures! The world was not made by some ruthless demon who plays with forms just by way of jest! No, I will not believe that, in spite of all that comes before my path. The world was made out of our thoughts, our attitudes. We make the world, we make the world. Ugly thoughts in us become ugly things outside us. O if only man could always be just and kind, and beautiful within the heart. Then there would never be sorrow and strife and death; all is wrong desire, wrong desire. If only we could escape it! O!

(*He moves from one spot to another*)

So, there is no happiness anywhere! Is killing, then, the sole law of life? How restless I am becoming. Peace. Was my father right, after all? Peace was a lie, he said. No. I will not be taken in by what my father said. Peace is not a lie. I will find it. I must. No matter how difficult the path, I will tread it.

(*He seats himself on a rock in contemplation. The voices of Nature now speak to him*)

A PAIR OF PARROTS
Peace, peace! Look for peace, peace. You will find peace, peace.

A PAIR OF ANTELOPES
Since, Prince, you are looking for peace, you will find peace.

(*They come close to Siddhartha who, without opening his eyes, strokes them gently*)

SIDDHARTHA (*slowly opening his eyes*)
Sweet creatures of the forest! You parrots of the wild! you do not speak what you are taught, but what you know; unlike the parrots we capture and cage for our own pleasure. Pleasure! To capture free creatures and cage them, that is man's idea of sport and pleasure.

(*To the antelopes*)

And you, sweet sad-eyed creatures! Why do you come to me? I can give you nothing. My hands are empty.

VOICE (*from somewhere*)
But your heart is full.

A BIRD'S VOICE (*from an unseen branch*)
You say you have nothing to give? You will. You will. You will give everything to everybody. Some day. Some day.

SIDDHARTHA
O Nature! how clear and sweet are your numerous voices.

(*Enters an Ascetic*)

ASCETIC
The whole sky is as the hollow of a divine palm spread over your head.

SIDDHARTHA
Are you a spirit wandering the outer ways of the world with purpose?

ASCETIC
You are unaccustomed to the forest. It is all so wild and lonely here. You seem used to luxury and comfort and crowded places.

SIDDHARTHA
I am a beggar, seeking alms.

ASCETIC
Alms?

SIDDHARTHA
I have come here to seek alms of peace. I want peace.

ASCETIC
You come to seek the most precious thing anybody could ever seek. Listen! I can give you what you are looking for; there is only one way to get it. That is by blowing out the fire of illusion, scorching the body which is built out of illusion.

SIDDHARTHA
Illusion? But I have already reduced my body to a skeleton.

ASCETIC
When the body gets emaciated, through penance, the soul begins to glow like a lamp for the first time. You need to intensify your penance..

(*He goes out like a curious spirit hardly seeming to walk on the earth*)

VOICES OF NATURE (*from all sides*)
No, no. No, no. No, no.
Give it up. Give it up.

The wrong way. The wrong way.
Give it up.
The middle path. The middle path. The middle path.

(Siddhartha is stirred by these little voices. Folk music sounds from a close-by village and, soon, a troupe of young Milkmaids enters, dancing a folk dance. Siddhartha retires to the rock)

SUJATA (*daughter of a Herdsman*)
Everything everywhere longs for a lover.

(The other Milkmaids tease her)

ONE MILKMAID
But the true one is hard to discover.

ANOTHER
The love in her bosom seems to transmute her.

ANOTHER
Yet no human lover seems to suit her! (*laughter all round*)

SUJATA
Although you are saying things in jest
What you have guessed you have rightly guessed.
(Laughter again)

ONE MILKMAID
In that case, Sisters! we'll have to apply to the gods for a bridegroom for her.

ANOTHER
And he will descend from the starry vault
Without a blemish, without a fault.

(Teasing Sujata who seems half-lost in a trance)

SUJATA
Although you are saying all this for spite,
I tell you, what you are saying is right.
(Laughter among the Milkmaids)

ONE MILKMAID
O ho ho! so her marriage day
Will come when the ages have passed away
And she has grown old and her love is an ember
Longer dead than the gods can remember.
(Again laughter. A squeaky little fellow, who has been wandering about the forest, suddenly emerges from the distance and comes to the group of maids with news)

BOY (*in a squeaky voice*)
O Mother! O Auntie! O anybody and everybody! a staring thing is in the forest.

A MILKMAID
An owl in the daytime!

BOY
No owl, but a cage of bones with two eyes that stare.

ANOTHER MILKMAID
Then it must be a carcase, the carcase of some dead beast with exposed eyeballs.

ANOTHER
Does it stink?

BOY
No, it doesn't stink, but it smells (*he closes his eyes and sniffs*) O what shall I tell you. It smells...not stinks.

A MILKMAID
What's the difference, little goat ?

BOY
It smells . . . . of flowers.

SUJATA
I'll go and see.

MILKMAIDS (*jokingly*)'
Perhaps, he is your lover come down from the sky earlier than you had expected! O ho ho! O ho ho!

(*Sujata goes towards the rock, while, from a distance, the Milkmaids watch her. Sujata bends before him and, then, after a pause, she suddenly turns back and comes towards her companions in great excitement.*)

SUJATA (*flushed in the face*)
O O O!

ONE MILKMAID
Something is wrong with her.

ANOTHER
She seems to have gone mad.

ANOTHER
It is difficult to tell as to who is mad and who is not.

SUJATA
O Sisters! Sisters! I have beheld him.

A MILKMAID
What news of the cage of bones which smells like flowers ?

SUJATA
Come, let us adore Him. He has come. My Lover has come. Let us adore Him with bowls of milk. He is a god come down to earth and, through penance, become emaciated. He has not eaten for months.

A MILKMAID
But a god is not expected to eat.
(*Laughter*)

ANOTHER
No, this is no time for jesting. Look at her eyes. Look at her eyes. How they have changed. They have a new light in them.

ANOTHER
Possibly, he, too, has been in love with Sujata, for years and years. And that is why he is so emaciated.

SUJATA (*dreamily*)
He must be in love, indeed; He alone seems capable of love. It is only a Lover who can become such a cage of bones! And yet, how stubborn hard He seems in every muscle ; and what a light in his eyes, what blinding splendour. My God!

MILKMAIDS
Anyway. Let us go and see him. It sounds as though we have really never seen such a creature on earth before. There's no harm in seeing him. Who knows? Sujata may be right. He may be a god, for aught we know.

(*Siddhartha himself comes forward, with slow deliberate steps towards the Milkmaids. Sujata immediately spreads her veil as a seat for him.*)

MILKMAIDS
Goodness! He comes himself towards us.
So, this is Sujata's lover.
Bridegroom from heaven. Looks as if there is famine there.
Hush. Can't you see? He is unusual. The closer he comes to us the more do we feel him. O...the young goat was right. He smells like flowers!
Yes, he does....like jasmines.
No, like a hundred flowers in one. (*the Milkmaids close their eyes as if trying to capture the fragrance*)

SIDDHARTHA (*addressing Sujata*)
May you be blessed.

SUJATA (*placing a bowl of milk at His feet*)
Pray, accept this bowl of milk and render it holy.

SIDDHARTHA
Thrice holy motherhood! I accept your gift, I who am your child.

A MILKMAID (*to Another*)
Calls her motherhood...not even mother! Funny sort of lover, that.

ANOTHER
And he calls himself her child. Never heard of such a love-affair in all history.

ANOTHER (*rather overpowered*)
It passeth all human understanding.

SIDDHARTHA
The human understanding is veiled. It is full of subterfuges.

VOICES OF NATURE
The middle path. The middle path!

SUJATA
Pray, Lord of splendour! renounce renunciation. Renounce asceticism. It is a doubtful path. The middle path is best of all.

SIDDHARTHA
I desire to end all desire.

SUJATA
Even the desire to end desire is itself a desire, my Lord.

VOICES OF NATURE
The middle path. The middle path.

BLACKOUT

(In the darkness mocking laughter. Commentary on the mike offstage.)

COMMENTARY
The laughter that you are hearing is the mocking laughter of the Five Disciples of Siddhartha whom they accepted as their master after he turned an ascetic.

SCENE TWO

(The forestage is lit up, revealing the Five Disciples, laughing their sides out)

DISCIPLES
O ho ho ho ho! what a fine master we accepted to serve. Perfect renunciation. He renounced, not his life, but his wife. Came all the way here to find another.

Renounced the whole kingdom to seek this woman, this daughter of a herdsman in a wild, god-forsaken forest. Gave up crystal jars of honey for an earthen bowl of milk! We refuse to be with him any longer.

(*Enter Siddhartha, Sujata following him*)

Chi! you false ascetic. We thought you had renounced the world. We now find we must renounce you. You disgrace asceticism. Chi! false ascetic. (*they go out in a great huff*)

(*Crowds of herdsmen and their families appear on the forestage; also young boys and girls full of joy and excitement. A cowherd is playing on his bamboo flute.*)

AN OLD HERDSMAN
Pray, young Sire! return from where you have come.

SIDDHARTHA
That's just what I am trying to do.

ANOTHER HERDSMAN
What's he saying ?

SIDDHARTHA
I am trying to go back from where I have come. If only we could go back to that place from where we have all come. We were born out of truth and to truth must we return.

AN OLD HERDSMAN
Sire, this forest is no place for such as you. Look at your hands and feet; how soft they are. You look like a prince used to soft carpets of plush and flowers, not to the thorny pathways of a forest.

A YOUNG HERDSMAN
Seems to be the son of a wealthy father.

ANOTHER
And the son of a beautiful mother.

ANOTHER
Or, at least the son of some wealthy widow.

ANOTHER
Go back, Sire. Go back to the world you have come from.

VOICES OF NATURE
No, no, no. The middle path. The middle path.

SIDDHARTHA
I pray you, all of you go back to the world from which you have come. I would be left alone.

(*The crowds disperse. Sujata alone is left as though she had become his shadow*)

BLACKOUT

(*In the darkness the mocking laughter of the Five Disciples is repeated, a sort of echo in the memory.*)

False ascetic.
Chi! you have insulted asceticism. O ho ho ho!

(*Curtain*)

ACT SEVEN

SCENE ONE

(Full moon day—on the day of enlightenment.)

(Siddhartha is seated under the Bo-Tree, his eyes fixed on a point within the heart. Rolling of deep-throated drums. Mara, the Demon, enters along with his numerous daughters, and sons.)

MARA
Come hither, gentle daughters! and come hither, noble sons!

CAPRICE
Father! some strange distress seems weighing on your mind.

DELIGHT
What grief dare wither my father's mighty heart?

MARA
Come, sweet son, Wantonness!
My son, Caprice! my dear son, Gaiety!
And you, my daughters; Discontent and Thirst
And passionate Desire! I want to bless you.....
For the last time, my children! I caress you
Since I, the God of Love, who have through ages
Held sole, unchallenged sway even over sages,
Over austere ascetics, master-seers,
I, who have been, through centuries of years,
Monarch of human hearts...I, God of Love,
Am now about to perish.

CHILDREN
You never can
Perish...you never shall, great God of Love,
Our powerful parent!

MARA
Yonder lo! a man
Who dares to dream alone and tread above
My knowledge and my will. I cannot shake him
Out from his slumbers. Nay! I cannot wake him
Out of his trance. Behold! I cannot make him
One of my captives.

CHILDREN
Father! we shall break him.
(*Here, terrific music of enchantment starts. Mara, with his six offsprings, approaches Siddhartha who is now attained to Buddhahood*)

MARA
Afraid of death and old age and disease....
Oof! and you are a warrior, if you please!
Come, give up all this farce. What man attains
To real liberation except through chains:
Go back, go back from where you came. Go back!

CHILDREN
Go back.
Go back.
Go back.
Go back.
Go back.

MARA
Or, if you will not, Prince! be sure and firm
About your vow, since here I hold a dart

Of love which strikes, swift-rendering man a worm,
Imprinting what a wound upon the heart!

(*Gautam sits silent, his eyes become slits through which a curious smile of blended pity and compassion seems to gleam.*)

What! do you dare to deem you are exempt
From love? What! do you hold us in contempt?
Strike, Daughters! strike him with your lightning rods,
Your darts which have demolished prouder gods!

(*To the sound of deep-voiced drums which roll and roll increasing in volume and tempo, moment to moment, darts are being hurled at Gautam who sits rooted like a tree in a storm. The daughters begin to shriek, as though stung by invisible snakes.*)

DAUGHTERS

O O O our arrows seem to return to us transformed into red-fanged serpents. They bite us... our life is ebbing. O O O!

SONS

He dares to make us perish. We shall see!

MARA

So, you, too, have your arrows...you have powers
Which have unveiled our arrows tipped with flowers,
Revealing serpents which they hid so long.

SONS

Father! give us leave to let loose our secret weapons of destruction. We will overthrow him. Sir! you have done wrong by slaying our sisters, Discontent, Thirst and Desire. You have done your worst, and now we'll follow suit.

(Here follows a magnificent Ballet of dark Forces which may be based on the old dance-drama form of the kathakali. The characters in the ballet are:)

Boars, Fishes, Horses, Asses, Camels, Tigers, Bears, Lions, Elephants, One-eyed creatures, Creatures with pendulous bellies, Three-headed Monsters, Speckled half-brutes, etc. etc.

(They carry as weapons lances, javelins, clouts, clubs, tree-trunks, swords etc.)

THE BALLET STARTS. THE DRUMS ARE SO TERRIFIC THAT THEY ALMOST SEEM TO BURST THE HEAVENS AND CRACK THE EARTH INTO TWO PIECES. THE EARTH GETS DARKENED AND SMOKE RISES FROM THE FOUR QUARTERS. FIRES SUDDENLY SEEM TO LEAP UP IN SPASMS. THE ENTIRE BALLET IS ONE OF DREAD AND TERROR.

(There are short periods during the ballet when the sounds seem to fade out. During such periods voices are heard above the fading sound.)

Ha ha ha! what a fool! What a contemptible fool! To have renounced a beautiful wife and a lovely son. No, no. It is putting it too politely. He is not just a fool. A fool can be forgiven. He is an unforgivable criminal.

MARA'S VOICE
Strike at the pretender! The self-termed sage! Strike at our most dangerous enemy. He has already slain

my daughters Discontent, Thirst and Desire. Soon he will slay my sons, too. my sons Caprice, Wantonness and Gaiety! Strike him! Ruthless be our blows. Strike him dead. Strike him dead!

(From every side Echo repeats: strike him dead. Strike him dead.)

What is he if not our bitterest enemy, the one who leaves the path of pleasure and lust and desire? Is he not our deadliest foe?

(Suddenly there is a great shriek. The sons of Mara drop dead.)

I told you. I told you. He would slay my sons!
Strike! This is our last chance, a life-and-death struggle for us all. Strike! *(drums)* Strike *(drums)* Strike, strike, strike.... *(drums)*

(The drums roll their fiercest and the ballet reaches its climax. Just at this juncture Gautam moves for the first time, and with the forefinger of his right hand touches the earth. The ballet stops automatically. Earth rumbles.)

BUDDHA
O Earth ! Mother of life! be witness, my Goddess of Truth!
My Earth! you are witness I have triumphed, I have conquered.
The kingdom of heaven is here. You, Earth! are the true and only kingdom of heaven. And man, the only god!

(Earth bursts with a rumble and the hosts of Mara flee. Now follows dead calm. Nothing stirs. All is an ocean of peace. The Angel of Earth suddenly appears, a lovely Woman with flowing hair trailing behind her as she walks towards Gautam.)

ANGEL OF EARTH

O Being more excellent than angels! It is true that when you performed, through life after life, your sacred rituals you ever poured water on my hair, I who am Mother Earth. Here, I bear testimony.

(She wrings her hair and a stream of water flows. Shrieks in the distance)

This has already become a huge flood and drowned the fleeing hosts of Mara. Can you not hear his hosts shriek helplessly?

(Lightning and thunder)

Do you hear the whole world creaking? It is an earthquake. It is the sign that the world is being turned topsy-turvy by your conquest which it can hardly bear. But you will now go back to it and preach the new doctrine. Your voice will ring throughout the ages. It will be heard by the numerous lands under the sky. For you are the Buddha, the Enlightened One. You are Gautam Buddha.

(There is a terrific sense of approaching storm. The Angel of Earth vanishes even as she appeared. The curtain slowly goes down.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

(The forestage. Gautam on the road, a lonely winding road where not a soul seems to tread. From behind, a group of people come rushing and shouting to him.)

VOICES SHOUTING

O Monk! do not walk on this lonely road. There lurks a dangerous robber yonder who spares none.

Beware of Angulimala, the Robber, notorious for cutting off the fingers of his victims before slaying them.
He wears a garland of human fingers round his throat.

(*Gautam still continues to walk, unmindful of the warning*)

VILLAGERS (*who come rushing on the stage*)
Pray, Monk, retrace your steps. The robber Angulimala is dangerous.
The road you tread is a lonely road. Go back, Monk.
That monk does not seem right in his head.
Can anybody who dwells too much on the soul ever retain a right head?
Running after the soul spoils the brain.
Why, it is only those whose brains are already spoilt run after the soul.
And Angulimala runs after such brainless fellows who walk straight into his jaws, in spite of warning.

A WOMAN VILLAGER
Stop chattering, you fools! You don't know who he is.
If you had eyes and your eyes saw his eyes you would have understood.

A MAN
Ho ho ho! only this beauty here has eyes; all the rest of us are blind !

HERDSMEN (*running towards Buddha*)
We pray, Monk, we pray you earnestly. Avoid yonder road.
Nobody who has trod upon it has ever yet been safe.

(*Enter Angulimala, a fearful-looking fellow wearing a garland of fingers.*)

ANGULIMALA
That is some impudence! Hardly in all these years have I ever seen anybody daring to walk this road alone, or even in groups of twenty and forty at a time! This clean-shaven fellow dares to come alone. Possibly he does so deliberately, being tired of the world and not caring to live any more. Why, he puts on an air as though he had conquered the last robber on earth. He hasn't conquered me as yet! Suppose now I were to take his life; what's the good, anyway! Except, of course, that it would only add another ten fingers including two thumbs, to my garland which is already overloaded.

(*Gautam walks slowly, with deliberate steps, since he is in no haste, having no particular place to reach and no consciousness of time. Angulimala runs after him but finds that the moment he is near him, something throws him back by a few steps; something, which he cannot explain, tends to make him walk backwards.*)

What's this! Is he a magician? Looks like it. The moment I approach him I am sort of thrown back without my knowing how; my limbs grow weak and I am forced to walk backwards. I can never reach him at this rate. I am unable to catch up with him, though he walks at a snail's pace. I have in my time overtaken running antelopes—even shot an arrow and rushed to the point where it was about to drop, and caught it in my hands before it could drop! Lord! what a fantastic experience. Whoever dreamed even in a dream that a fellow of this kind could ever exist in the world.
Hey you, there, Monk! stand still. Stand still.

BUDDHA (*stands still*)
I stand still, Angulimala. Do you also stand still.

ANGULIMALA
You seem the last word on truth and yet when you say: I stand still, you seem to be uttering the biggest lie that was ever invented. Hey, Monk! I don't understand you. Even as you walk you say : I stand still. And to me you say I stand not still.

(*Counts this proposition on the tips of his fingers*)

How stand you still and I stand not still?

BUDDHA
I stand steadfast forevermore, Angulimala.
For I am merciful to all beings,
Therefore, I stand still, and you stand not still.

(*Angulimala rushes round and round the stage like one demented, twirls his sword and flings it out of sight. He tears the garland of fingers and flings it on the ground.*)

VOICE ON THE MIKE
Darkness cannot resist the light; cruelty cannot resist compassion. The lord Gautam Buddha is a fire which cleanses all evil.

ANGULIMALA (*sobbing wildly*)
O Compassionate Lord! forgive me my crimes.

GAUTAM (*raising him from the dust*)
You are already one of my true disciples. Arise. Sin repented changes to power. The tears of one who has erred become the pearls on the crown of truth.

(*A crowd of herdsmen, cowboys, etc. appears on the stage cheering wildly.*)

A HERDSMAN
The Monk has conquered Angulimala.

BUDDHA
Angulimala has conquered himself. Nobody conquers anybody. The only conquest is the conquest of oneself over one's self.

(*Wild cheering.*)

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

(*The curtain rises on the scene of heretics busy discussing the arrival of the Monk Gautam.*)

FIRST HERETIC
From the time the Monk Gautam appeared on the scene we have lost both gain and honour.

SECOND HERETIC
And now no one even so much as sniffs to find out if we exude the smell of the living or the stink of the dead.

THIRD HERETIC (*in a whisper*)
Somehow, we must try and finish this myth called Gautam.

FIRST HERETIC
That's not so difficult. There she comes, the one who can explode the myth named Gautam.

(*Enter Sundari, a charming woman*)

SUNDARI
You seem as if you were black clouds about to weep.

ONE HERETIC
O Sister of our Order of Heretics! welcome.

ANOTHER
We are black clouds all right. But we are not going to shed *water*, we assure you; we are out to lighten and thunder and frighten the world which adores the monk Gautam.

SUNDARI
Why, what harm has he done us? He seems but an innocent simpleton, a non-interfering sort of nincompoop. I don't think he can hurt a fly, even if he wants to.

A HERETIC
O that's all you know about him. Can't you see how his coming on the scene has driven us off the stage?

SUNDARI
That's true, of course. But what's to be done about it ?

A HERETIC
You can do a lot. In fact, I was going to say, it is you alone who can help re-establish our lost dignity and honour.

SUNDARI
How?

A HERETIC
By exposing your own to the monk. Come close. Let us plan it out carefully; but nobody, not a soul, must know.

ANOTHER
Bring disgrace on Gautam . . . Put him into such a situation that the world will spit upon him and his ochre robes!

SUNDARI
Leave it to me. You may change my name if I don't succeed.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

(On the forestage Sundari, in the evening light, walks alone. Women, passing by, speak to her, for she is well known obviously.)

A WOMAN
Hallo, Sister! your name Sundari, the beautiful one, suits you so well.

SUNDARI
I should think it does For....*(smiles to herself)* O well, it is, perhaps, best not to talk of romance.

ANOTHER WOMAN
Romance? But where are you going, with garlands and perfumes and . . .

ANOTHER WOMAN
And camphor and fruits and myrrh?

ANOTHER WOMAN
It is best not to poke one's nose into other's affairs. Now, is that not so, Sundari?

SUNDARI
O it is nothing private, really. It is just a romance which is about to work out because the stars in my horoscope want it.

(Laughter all round)

A WOMAN (*taking her aside*)
Joking apart, where do you go every evening so late when it is time to be indoors? And—with all these garlands and this paraphernalia?

SUNDARI
Why do you want to know?

A WOMAN
Well, you know that we women are inquisitive?

SUNDARI
As if men are not! Well, I don't mind telling you, anyway. If you want to know: I am going to spend the night alone . . . with . . . you can't guess with whom.

WOMEN
Tell us, tell us.

SUNDARI
The monk Gautam.

WOMEN
O O O! what are you saying? The monk Gautam.

SUNDARI
Yes, in his perfumed chamber. But don't tell anybody.

WOMEN
Why should we go and blabber out a secret?
I'll be the last person to sneak.
But the way you go every evening, the secret is bound to become public. (*Sundari goes out*)

A WOMAN (*to another just come on the stage*)
That was Sundari.

THE WOMAN
Very pretty creature.

A WOMAN
Beauty is the greatest power on earth. She asked me not to tell anybody; but I can tell you, provided you promise not to tell anybody.

THE WOMAN
I promise.

A WOMAN
She goes every night to the monk Gautam's.

THE WOMAN
For spiritual instruction?

A WOMAN
O yes, O yes, spiritual instruction in the monk's perfumed chamber.

(*Laughter all round*)

ANOTHER WOMAN
What ! ! !

(*Heretics come that way, whispering to each other.*)

HERETICS
Hallo, all of you.

WOMEN
This path is meant only for us women. How have you managed to find entry here?

HERETICS
We are heretics who believe in nothing . . .
Saw Sundari go by?

A WOMAN
Yes, and she told us a secret before she went.

A HERETIC
Sundari told you a secret? Has she any secret to tell?

WOMEN
Is there any woman on earth who has not got a secret?
(*Laughter*)

A HERETIC
Where has she gone at this strange hour?

A WOMAN
I can tell you provided you don't blurt it out to anybody. It is strictly confidential.

A HERETIC
Well, we promise, then. Tell us.

A WOMAN (*in a whisper*)
She has gone to spend the night with the monk Gautam, alone . . .

ANOTHER HERETIC
What! alone . . . to spend the night . . . with Gautam? Incredible.

WOMEN
It is true. It is true.
(*The women laugh and go out together, feeling quite happy that they were able to spread a scandal.*)

FIRST HERETIC
Well, in any case, it is public property now.

SECOND HERETIC
What is.

FIRST HERETIC
The secret! Everybody in the kingdom will now know what a fraud the monk Gautam is. (*laughter*).

THIRD HERETIC (*in a whisper*)
We must conduct our business in whispers.

(*Three men enter : hefty cruel hirelings*)

Here, take this advance. Ten gold pieces each.

FIRST HERETIC
After you have slain Sundari and thrown her mangled body on the pile of withered garlands and rubbish near the monk's perfumed chamber, you must return to us.

SECOND HERETIC
To claim ten gold pieces more . . . each one of you. You understand?

ONE MAN (*looking at the gold pieces*)
Gold is power, isn't it?

ANOTHER (*grinning*)
Makes the mare go.

ANOTHER
Can both buy up women and murder them, too.

A MAN
And now to our crimson profession.

ANOTHER
We shan't call it murder. We shall say it was her fate.

(*They go out. Fade out light and Fade in again.*)

SCENE FIVE

(*The Heretics are now out to prepare the ground for the mysterious disappearance of Sundari.*)

A HERETIC (*to a passerby*)
Have you seen Sundari pass this way?

PASSERBY
Sundari! who is Sundari?

ANOTHER HERETIC
A Sister of our Order.

PASSERBY
Your Order? What Order? You look like the Heretics.

ANOTHER HERETIC
We are, and, therefore, we belong to the Order of the Enlightened Ones.

(*The street begins to have people streaming in*)

A MAN
I say, there is a strange rumour about the monk who has come to preach to us.

ANOTHER
What?

(*One man whispers to another*)

Is it possible? Who could have believed it. The eyes of the monk are so frank.

FIRST MAN
Appearances are deceptive, Brother.
(*They go out*)

A HERETIC (*to some passersby*)
Could you tell us where our fine sister Sundari has gone?

PASSERBY
Sister Sundari? If she resembles in appearance the name she bears she must be beautiful. And beauty is its own reward and own doom.

ONE PASSERBY
O yes, yes. The last we saw her was yesterday, in the evening.
She was telling somebody on the way she was going to the perfumed chamber of the monk Gautam.

HERETIC
The monk Gautam!

ANOTHER
We overheard her saying that she has been spending nights with him almost ever since his coming here.

HERETICS (*purposely shouting at the top of their voices*)
O we have lost a wonderful friend, a great Sister of the Order of the Enlightened Ones!
O O O! please help us to find her. We cannot find our sister.

AN ELDERLY MAN
The best thing would be to report to the King.

HERETICS
Good idea. To the king Jetavana. Good idea. Very.

A HERETIC
I am sure the monk has hidden her somewhere.

ANOTHER HERETIC
O down with these fake monks, these ochre-wearing criminals.

VOICES
Down with them! Down with them! We must go to the King and appeal to him to institute an enquiry immediately.

ANOTHER HERETIC
Shaving the head and putting on ochre apparel. That's how the credulous are taken in.

A BOY
A shaven head makes one look like a monkey.

VOICES
We'll go to the King. We'll go to the King. The King is a man of tremendous charity, understanding and benevolence, a man of justice.

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

(The curtain rises on the palace chamber: the King Jetavana and his Minister. A Messenger enters and announces the arrival of the Heretics.)

MESSENGER
Your Majesty! Members of the Order of the old Enlightened Ones wish to have audience with your Majesty.

KING JETAVANA
Call them in.

(*Heretics come in*)

HERETICS (*bowing to the King*)

Sire, our sister Sundari has been missing.
She hasn't returned to our hermitage and we are anxious.
The passersby on the roads whispered that they saw her enter the chamber of the monk Gautam in the middle of the night.
We are sorry to come with a complaint like this, for we know how deeply your Majesty respects and adores the monk.

KING JETAVANA
Whispering tongues are not to be relied on. They do a lot of harm.

(*Another Messenger rushes in breathless*)

MESSENGER
O king, king ! I have sad news for you. They have found Sundari.

KING JETAVANA
That is hardly sad news. I am glad they have found her.

MESSENGER
No, I did not put it right. They have found, not her, exactly..but part of her.

HERETICS
What! What is the messenger trying to say, your Majesty?

MESSENGER
They are bringing her mangled body, they are bringing the pieces on a litter towards the palace for the king's scrutiny.
(*Voices outside the palace*)

VOICES
We demand justice.
Revenge! Revenge! We demand justice. We know our King is just. The monk Gautam has slain Sundari, a Sister of the order of the Enlightened Ones.
Chi, chi! shame! shame !!!
We want justice. Justice must be granted.
The monk should be brought to justice.

KING JETAVANA
Such a thing has never happened in our kingdom before. No monk has ever turned out to be a murderer. And I have housed and fed several monks during my reign.

VOICES (*outside*)
Our king has been harbouring a villain who has been caught red-handed.
Bring him to justice. We demand it.
Put him on the gallows.
Hang him. Hang him.
Rascal of a monk! Hang him. Hang him.

KING JETAVANA
I shall not accept what the people say on mere hearsay. I refuse to believe that our monk has turned murderer. I want proof.

A HERETIC
Sire, pardon us. But would your people have shouted their lungs so hoarse had they not had proof enough of the monk's guilt?

KING JETAVANA
You seem to know a lot about the murder. However, I want proof.

(*Suddenly, cleaving their way through the crowds the three Hirelings, dead drunk, come rushing into the chamber. The Heretics try to stop them.*)

FIRST HIRELING
Fool! don't block the way.

A HERETIC (*in a whisper*)
Stand outside. We are coming. We must pay you the extra ten gold pieces each.

SECOND HIRELING
I killed Sundari. And this fool here says it was he who killed her.

THIRD HIRELING
Mine was the first blow. But she didn't die then. I killed her with a second blow. I did.

FIRST HIRELING
I killed her. You can't take the credit so easily.

KING JETAVANA
They are drunk. And when drink goes in, the truth comes out. Go on, go on. Tell us more.

SECOND HIRELING
King! you are a great king. We know you will reward us for our courage. These three fellows here, these heretic fellows....

HERETICS
Shut up, you drunken clouts. We don't know who you are. Shut up. Who the devil are you? And how did they enter without the permission of the king?
They are obviously the hirelings of the monk. What a clever monk. His hands are free, but his soul is soiled with blood. Poor Sundari! So, King! what greater proof do you want? These hirelings of the monk are enough proof. We must be going now, your Majesty. It is time for our worship. The household gods must be waiting for us.

KING JETAVANA
The gods can wait. They have enough patience.
(*to the Hirelings*) Go on. Tell us the whole story.

ONE HIRELING
Your Majesty! I killed Sundari at one stroke. I have a sure aim and have, through long practice, become a past master of the trade.

ANOTHER
King, he is a born liar. I killed her.

ANOTHER
I killed her, your Majesty! and it is I who should have received all the gold pieces. (*looks at the Heretics*)

KING JETAVANA
You were promised gold pieces?

HERETICS
Your Majesty! the household gods will be angry with us....

KING JETAVANA
O yes, they will be. (*to the Hirelings*) Or were you already given gold pieces? And if so, by whom?

HIRELINGS
By whom? Why, there they are. Our friends. Our good old friends. Members of the Order of the Enlightened.

MINISTER
They look just now like Members of the Order of the Frightened.

(*Loud laughter everywhere*)

HERETICS
The household gods will never forgive us....

KING JETAVANA
You are again right. They never will forgive you. But, let me tell you, that these three hirelings here are the real gods who will tell us all about the murder. (*to the Hirelings*) You killed Sundari? You committed the murder?

A HIRELING
Yes, you may call it that, I suppose. When one kills for the sake of a hire, it is called murder. But when people kill each other on the battlefield for the sake of wages, it is called heroism.

KING JETAVANA (*to the Hirelings*)
I take it, you know these three men here.

A HIRELING
Know them? Why! they have already given us ten pieces of gold each and promised to give us ten more after we have committed the murder.

KING JETAVANA (*to Minister*)
Have these heretics arrested and lead them through the streets and make them proclaim publicly: We killed Sundari. The monk Gautam is innocent. The monk Gautam is alone the Enlightened One among men. He is the New Order.

MINISTER
A very light sentence, indeed, your Majesty!

KING JETAVANA
The sentence is not complete. After the innocence of the monk has been proved before my people, have the heretics hanged on a tree.

CROWDS (*outside*)
Justice. We want justice. Hang them. Hang them. Our king is a just king. Hang them. Hang them. The monk is innocent. O wonderful monk! what a wonderful monk. He is a god. He is a god! Let us go and fall at his feet. He will save us. He will save us.

KING JETAVANA
The multitude is so easily swayed; so easily poisoned by rumour.

BLACKOUT

SCENE SEVEN

(On the lit forestage, Gautam sits on a small rock. He is surrounded by a crowd of followers. Suddenly, a Woman bearing a dead child in her arms comes and sobs before him.)

WOMAN
O Sire, Sire! my jewel is lost. My little lamp has been blown out. I am lonesome. I am left without any hope in life. I am broken.

GAUTAM (*gazes into her eyes calmly*)
Arise. Wipe away your tears.

WOMAN
O Sire, rumour tells us that you are immortal. You are a god, they say. They say you can bring back the dead to life. Here, here is my babe, my stricken flower who has left the garden of my life bare.

GAUTAM
Arise. You must not grieve, you must not moan.

WOMAN
Is there no way of this little form being brought back to life?

GAUTAM
The body is only a form of clay, mother!

WOMAN
O Sire, won't you give me back my babe ? Won't you fill it again with breath ?

GAUTAM
I could, if only you would fetch me a mustard seed...

WOMAN (*brightening up*)
That's easily done, Sire.

GAUTAM
But from a house which has never seen death.

WOMAN
Master, I will go forth and seek such a house and fetch you the mustard seed. (*she goes out*)

GAUTAM (*quietly to his disciples*)
Poor Woman! She may go to the ends of the earth but she will not find such a house. For every house that is built on earth, there are more graves than one, ready to receive its inmates.

BLACKOUT

(*In the darkness the commentary on the mike*)

COMMENTARY
The woman goes from house to house, knocks at door after door enquiring whether any house be free from the experience of having lost a dear one. Over and over again she receives the one answer: Woman! are you mad? Are you mad that you are wasting your time and spending your energy in trying to find a house into which Death has never entered. Go back.

(*The forestage is lit again. Gautam is seated where he was, the Woman returns with her dead child.*)

WOMAN
O Master! Master!

GAUTAM
Mother! have you brought me the mustard seed?

WOMAN
I did not find the mustard seed you wanted. I need not now try and look for it. It is my ignorance which made me hope for the impossible. I understand now the meaning of life. The Master has opened my eyes for me. Death is the secret of human life so long as its riddle remains unsolved.

GAUTAM
Yours, therefore, is not the only sorrow; this world is filled with sorrow, because this world is filled with wrong desire, with twisted cravings.

WOMAN
Without a tear I shall bury the dead.

GAUTAM
Dust unto dust.

WOMAN
I have but one desire left, Master. To join your Order of Nuns.

(*A host of Buddhist Nuns comes chanting past. She joins them and slowly kneeling, one by one, at the monk's feet, they move out their chanting fading out very gradually. Gautam left alone on the forestage, in deep meditation. Fade out light.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT EIGHT

SCENE ONE

(The city of Kapilavastu. Siddhartha has returned to his dear city, not as Siddhartha, but as a monk. The people come forth to meet and greet him: women, children and men applaud loudly. From the palace window King Suddhodana looks out and watches the scene. Now we see the Queen standing beside him. Above the crowd-noises on the mike offstage we hear the voices of the King and the Queen in conversation.)

CHORUS

He has come back with his banner of peace unfurled,
Not prince of an earthly kingdom but lord of the world.
Where is his banner? It is the measureless heaven which glows
Silver and gold in the night, in the morning, amber and rose.
Where is his banner? It cleaves the darkness and sorrow departs,
Wide as a luminous pinion it spreads in human hearts.
The fish in the water, the corn in the field and the birds in the air
Assume a great peace akin to some last fulfilment of prayer.
This day not an inch of the realms of time and space is dumb,
Creation awakens from slumber and shouts with a-plomb: He has come,
Not the prince of an earthly kingdom but sovereign lord of the world
With a banner of peace immortally over the ages unfurled.

O gaze on his form, high symbol of heavenly light, it resembles
A shadowless deep beyond the great deep of creation and time.
Stillness is packed in his being, a sky-tinged lotus trembles
Between his fingers carven of splendour. He is sublime,
Casting no shadow... nothing on Earth in his beauty remains,
Gaze on his heavenly form, O Earth! and come clear of your chains.

KING'S VOICE (*while he points out of the window*)
Can you see? There seems to be great excitement in the city this morning. Look, look! look at the crowds; never seen such a sight in all my life.

QUEEN'S VOICE
They seem to be gathering round some strange figure, unusual to look at. There! clean-shaven head. How it shines in the rising sun. That figure has donned ochre robes. They adore him, King! He has become the centre of a widening circle.

KING'S VOICE
They are evidently strewing flowers on his path. May be somebody from another kingdom.

QUEEN'S VOICE
He seems greater than a king. Look ! I can see him distinctly now. How wonderful his eyes are.

KING'S VOICE
Yes, and do you see something burning round him? A sort of halo. I see it distinctly. A golden halo.

(The crowds swell and lead the Monk out. The King and the Queen watch the procession and when it has gone out they shut the window)

BLACKOUT

(The whole crowd has now come on the forestage. A Messenger runs towards it and shouts at the top of his voice.)

MESSENGER (*cleaving through the crowds*)
Make way. Make way. The King Suddhodana comes. Salute him.

VOICE
We salute only One who is greater than the King.

MESSENGER
What seditious voice is that? Arrest the rascal.

ANOTHER
We salute the Monk, the being who radiates light.

VOICES
Look at his eyes if you dare. There is a fire in them which can burn up all the dross and disease of the world.
He is as calm as a mountain and as strong.
Who may he be? His face is familiar.
He walks like a god.
He is a god. Can't you see the way his body seems to be pure spirit through which a bird could fly as through an atmosphere?

MESSENGER
Make way. Here comes the King.

KING
What! Impossible. Is this not my son? Surely my blood can recognize my own blood. My son, Siddhartha!

VOICES
O he has come back! He has come back.
And we were blind.
We were always blind. Men are blind until one like Him comes to cure them of their blindness.

KING
My Son!

GAUTAM
Who are you to call me son?

KING
I am the king, your father.

GAUTAM
For me there is but one King and that is Truth. As for me, there is no father, no mother, no brother..All men to me are related. The world is my family.

KING
Have you returned completely insane?

AN OLD MAN
He who has returned is the sanest man that was ever born; perhaps, the first sane man in creation! Gautam Buddha, once your royal son, the Prince who left the city one night, long ago.

KING
Is this he who was once the Prince of our kingdom? A

beggar. A beggar clad in ochre robe, his head clean-shaven? What!

MESSENGER
Sire, the beggar you behold, they say, is the Lord of truth. Truth was always a beggar, a plain thing without trappings. He has come with a bowl in his hand to beg from door to door. And the door at which he stands shall be blessed forever.

KING
I shan't let him beg. A mendicant! A beggar! No, not in my kingdom shall he beg.

GAUTAM
Who are you? A king? No, no. You are but a mere beggar in a kingdom of shadows seeking, seeking, seeking, without finding. That is why you are so miserable. With all your worldly wealth and comfort you are a miserable creature who spend sleepless nights and troubled days.

KING
He speaks with divine confidence. And yet, it hurts me to think that he has come in the garb of a beggar to the very kingdom of which he should be the rightful emperor. O Son, Son!

GAUTAM
Mark me. I have gone beyond relationships.

KING
Why do you mortify me thus? I am overwhelmed with shame to see you in this state. Know you not that it would be a disgrace for me if, in this very city of your

royal birth, you should go from house to house begging and receiving alms? Come, we shall house you in our palace and you shall not need to beg.

GAUTAM
Palace? Poor King! the only true palace of men is the six-foot pyre or earth-hole. Why do you not see me as I am?

KING
Why do you put me to shame?

GAUTAM
O earthly King! I am not putting you to shame. I am merely keeping up the tradition of my lineage.

KING
Tradition of your lineage? To gain a livelihood by going from house to house begging for alms? You call this our tradition.

GAUTAM
No, King! I don't. It is not your tradition. It is mine. Countless thousand Buddhas have gone before, begging from house to house and receiving alms.

KING
Swindle, I call it. Swindle of poor householders.

GAUTAM
What does an earthly king do? He exploits the whole kingdom and demands the toil of his subjects by way of divine right. Is that not so?

(The crowds cheer. The multitudes shout "Long live Gautam, the Monk. Long live the Great One etc.")

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

(The forestage is suddenly dark and a narrow spot light is turned on Yashodara and Rahul who are seen inside a small circle. The crowds have disappeared. In the darkness at one corner the faint figure of Gautam.

YASHODARA
I shan't go to meet him.

RAHUL
You won't go to meet him? Everybody is rushing to meet him, as though he were a festival.

YASHODARA
Let the whole town fall at his feet. Let the whole town adore him. You, too, go and adore him. You are his son. You owe him a duty. As for me, I shall not budge an inch from my position. I shall wait for him; if he cares to meet me he will come towards me. He who left me must come back to me. Let the whole town go to meet him. He will have to come to meet me.

RAHUL
Mother! I have never seen you so proud. Are you proud because my father has returned?

YASHODARA (*wipes a tear away*)
Proud! O! I shall humble him who went away from us with pride in his heart and now returns to us like a beggar.
Go, Rahul. Go and meet him and call him father.

(The spot shifts on to Gautam and Rahul, while Yashodara is in the darkness, a dim figure waiting.)

RAHUL
I thought I would call you father but, great Monk! you seem so far-away and free that I dare not do so now. I call you Master...Beautiful Master!

GAUTAM
Welcome, sweet Disciple!
O beautiful and sad city of Kapilavastu! I have kept my word. I have returned after conquering life....and death ! ! !

RAHUL
Master! there is yet another disciple waiting for you. My mother is waiting to salute you.

GAUTAM
Our Mother.

SCENE THREE

(*The stage is now wholly lit and Gautam slowly walks towards Yashodara with Rahul walking by his side.*)

YASHODARA
O he comes this way. I have conquered. I have conquered at last. I have conquered him, he, after whom the whole kingdom has been running since his return, is now coming towards one.

(*As he approaches her*)

But what am I saying?
As he comes closer I feel I am being conquered. O What a wonderful monk! (*he has come close to her now*) Forgive me for my pride, my insolence, my anger. They

have vanished at your approach leaving but a great big adoration in the heart.
Enlightenend One! will you deign to enter our chamber but once. I would, along with my son Rahul, adore you, making you sit on a seat of flowers, offering incense to you and chants.

GAUTAM
I shall enter the chamber.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

(The curtain rises on the chamber, the selfsame one where Siddhartha had years ago left his sleeping wife and child. The parrot in the cage is silent.)

MALLIKA
He comes like a god in fullest triumph.

MAIDS (*in swift succession*)
You remember what the sage Asita Muni had prophesied?
You remember how the Prince used to shine like gold?
You remember how he used to talk in childhood to his white toy-horse and say: If you had wings I would fly riding on your back?
If only Kanthak had been alive now to see the Prince.
Channa does not know that his master has returned or else he would have been the first to rush and greet him.
Channa has gone old now. He grew old sooner than he should have, through grief of being separated from his Master Siddhartha.

Ever since he left, Channa has been living the life of a hermit.
But Siddhartha has returned now.
No, it isn't Siddhartha but Gautam Buddha they call him now.

(*Enter Gautam, Yashodara and Rahul. The parrot shrieks in joy.*)

PARROT
I am hungry. I am hungry.

GAUTAM (*compassionately*)
Still hungry! You shan't be hungry very long.

(*He frees the bird. It comes out and perches on Gautam's shoulders*)

No more captivity for you. And yet, being used to a cage all its life, freedom would seem unnatural and uncomfortable to the poor bird, my childhood's friend.

(*Channa comes rushing in, excited.*)

CHANNA
O Master! Master! you have returned. Not only *my* master now, but the master of all men. The divine Master!

(*Gautam blesses him*)

GAUTAM
Channa! you have grown old beyond recognition.

CHANNA
After you went away, Sire, my youth left me. My soul went with you, leaving this body behind.

GAUTAM
And now with me has it returned.

(Gautam walks slowly towards Yashodara extending his bowl before her)

Give me alms.

YASHODARA
I have naught to give as alms save my self. . .Pray, accept me as one of your disciples.

(Then enter the King and the Queen, the Court Poet, the Court Jester and the palace retinue.)

KING
Let us adore him.

QUEEN
Let us anoint him.

COURT POET
Lord of compassion! Conqueror of peace!

COURT JESTER
He has come, this Lord of Peace, to join the pieces of th broken world together and make it whole again. I knov my wit has lost its edge and my humour its soul; but th sole reason is that the monk is so calm and self-gathered, so brimful of peace and so silent that when I try and crack a joke I only seem to crack myself.

ALL
Come, let us anoint him.

(Women bring unguents, etc. but Gautam will not allow himself to be anointed)

GAUTAM
No. I am a monk who must walk the roadways, preaching my message : a man among men.

(Deva Dutta rushes in with a few Followers)

DEVA DUTTA
So, this is our warrior! Ha ha ha! I knew he would end up by shaving his head and wearing the ochre robe. The life of a monk is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

COURT JESTER
So are your politics.

GAUTAM *(calmly)*
Deva Dutta!

.DEVA DUTTA
I must not remain here any longer. There's something in his voice which makes me afraid. Come, my Followers ! let us quit.

FOLLOWERS
We quit you. We follow him from today.

(Cheering everywhere. Enter a band of Bhikkus, chanting)

buddham sharanam gachchami
dhammam sharanam gachchami
sangam sharanam gachchami

(The whole atmosphere of the stage has grown tense with a sense of devotion. Other Bhikkus come in

with great big urns of lit incense. Offstage the mike receives blended noises of cheering voices and the sound of gongs and chants. Above it the Monk Gautam Buddha delivers his message.)

GAUTAM
Go ye, Bhikkus! into the world and preach the message of the Buddha: the message of peace. Go ye into a world of broken men, exploited men, wounded men. . . and preach my message. Say to the world: Peace! And peace shall only come when it has attained enlightenment after conquering wrong desire, greed, hatred and lust; and then no man shall exploit another and equality shall reign in the world. Equality and Understanding and Peace. Peace! Peace! Peace!

EPILOGUE

(The booming of cannon is heard in the distance. The scene of war is once more enacted, as at the start, on the 16 mm. screen. The forestage is lit and we find the Bhikku and the European Traveller as we left them at the start of the play.)

BHIKKU
And so, you have seen, how the Great Lord Gautam Buddha fought over the evil forces of the world and conquered them, not for his own sake, but for the sake of humanity. His message which today is needed more than ever, when wars are being fought and enmities rampant everywhere, his message of peace is needed. But this message has been preached in our country throughout its history. From Buddha's time the message has been coming down right up to our own when Mahatma Gandhi preached it and even died for it. And today, Jawaharlal Nehru bears in his hand the banner of

Panchashila. The world is looking up to him to show the way towards the solution of mutual hatred, suspicion and dissolution. Peace. Peace. Everybody looks back across two thousand five hundred years and recalls the Golden Lord.

The palmyra leaf screen which was seen at the beginning of the play once again is let down from the proscenium arch and on it the title:

SIDDHARTHA

MAN

OF

PEACE

THE LIVING THOUGHTS
OF
KARL MARX

Presented by

LEON TROTSKY

"The whole strength of Marx's methods was in his approach to economic phenomena, not from the subjective point of view of certain persons, but from the objective point of view of the development of society as a whole. . . . . .

For economic science the decisive significance is what and how people act, not what they themselves think about their actions. At the base of society is not religion and morality but nature and labour. Marx's method is *materialistic*, because it proceeds from existence to consciousness, not the other way around. Marx's method is *dialectic* because it regards both nature and society as they evolve and evolution itself as the constant struggle and conflicting forces."

—Leon Trotsky.

IN PRESS

THE LIVING THOUGHTS
OF
CONFUCIUS

Presented by

ALFRED DOEBLIN

"Confucius and the orthodox teachings elevate us. We gain a profound obligation to act in a way which is natural and not directed by fear of punishment. Confucius makes us the guarantors of a regular world order, and we must not forget our responsibility for a moment because one move follows directly on the other and only a cash trade is carried on. . . . .

Times have certainly changed since Confucius, but the mind of man and human nature have remained unchanged for these two thousand five hundred years. Today, just as in Confucius' time, men are still striving for a social society, the will to live to see a spiritual moral world and the (uncertain) feeling that such an existence is possible prevails unchanged; the struggle for happiness and stability goes on".

—Alfred Doeblin.

IN PRESS

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J—50 WHIRLWIND—N. S. Phadke



Harindranath Chattopadhyaya was born in Hyderabad, (Dn.) in April 1898. He started writing rhymes at the age of eight and when he was 14 years old he had written many plays. His first book "Feast of Youth" was published in 1917 and it won praise from critics both in India and abroad.

Shri Chattopadhyaya is a man of versatile genius and varied interests. He is a pioneer in theatre-craft and progressive literature. He has staged several of his plays and is himself a talented actor. He has written a good number of poems in Hindi also. His famous song; Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai, became very popular in India as well as in China.

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